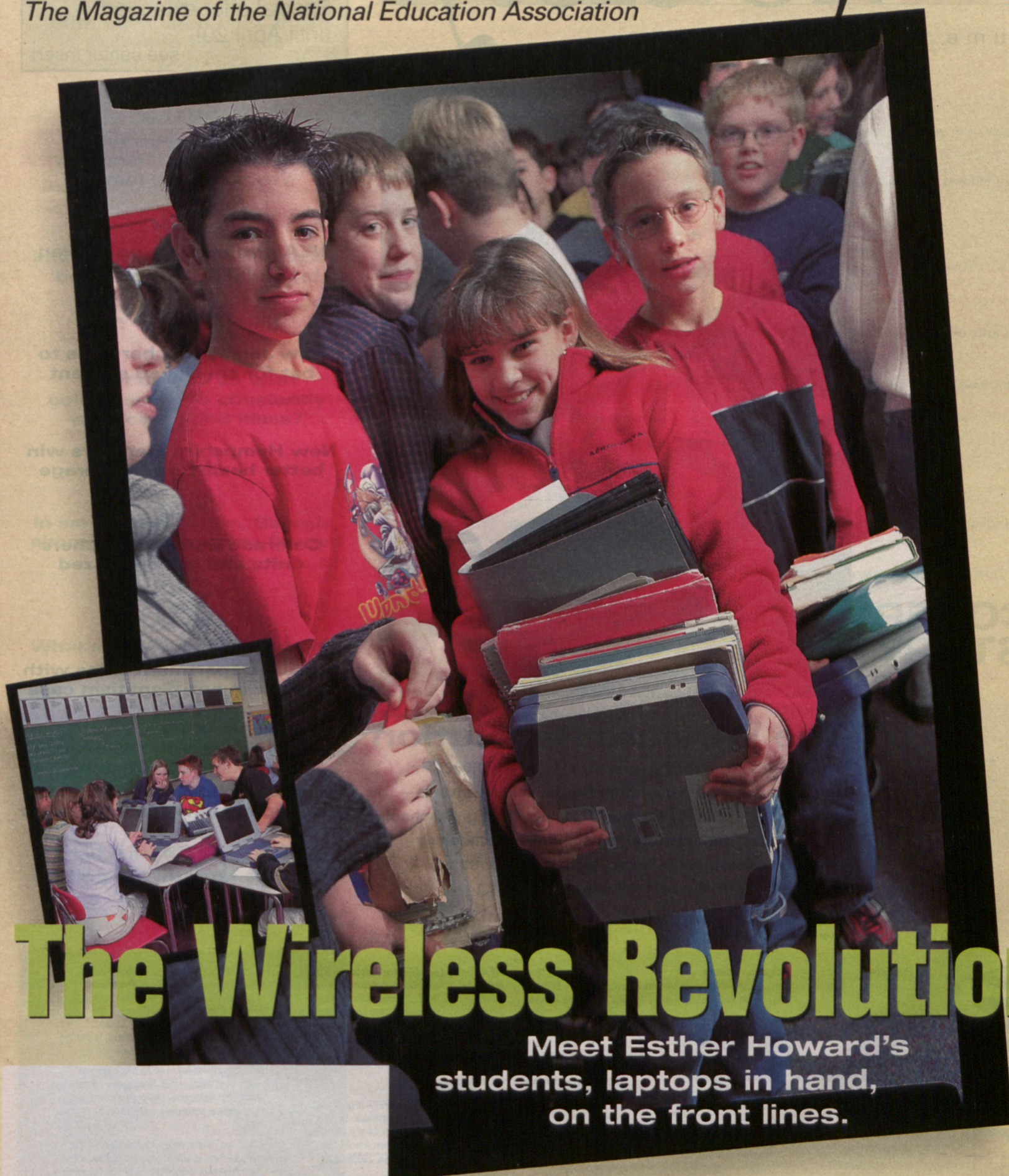


NEA Today

The Magazine of the National Education Association

March 2001

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The Wireless Revolution

Meet Esther Howard's
students, laptops in hand,
on the front lines.

NEA Today

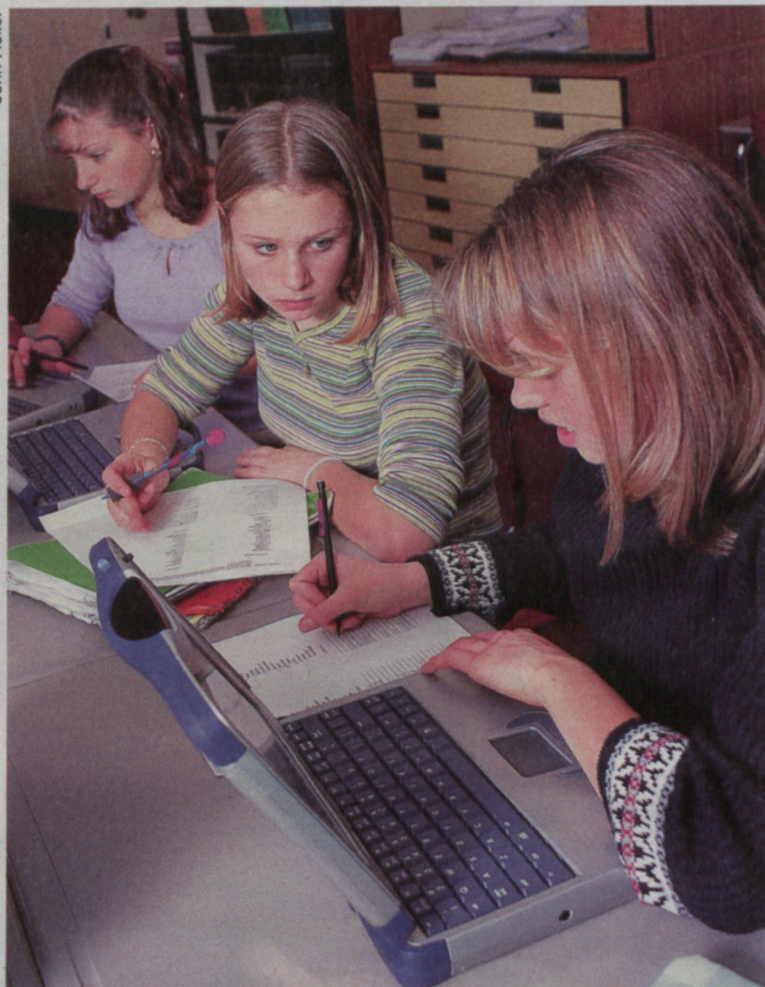
Volume 19 • Number 6

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John Heller



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The Wireless Revolution

With wireless computers—one for each of the 1,000 students at Latrobe Junior High School in Pennsylvania—teachers are advancing the front lines of learning. At school, all the laptops are networked using infrared technology installed in classroom ceilings. The computers run on battery power for after-school use.

Cover photo by John Heller

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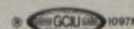
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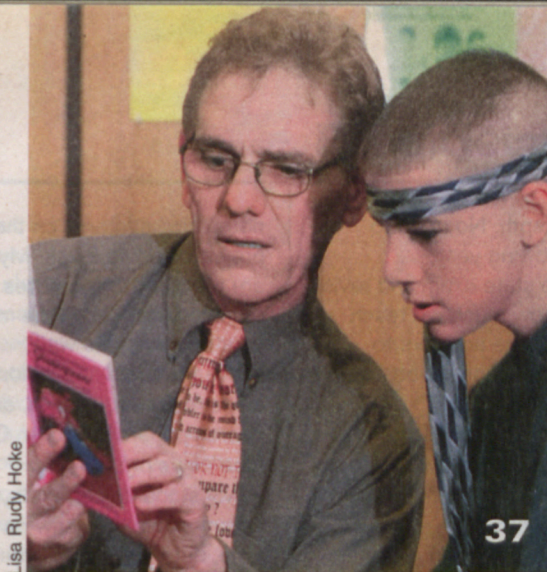
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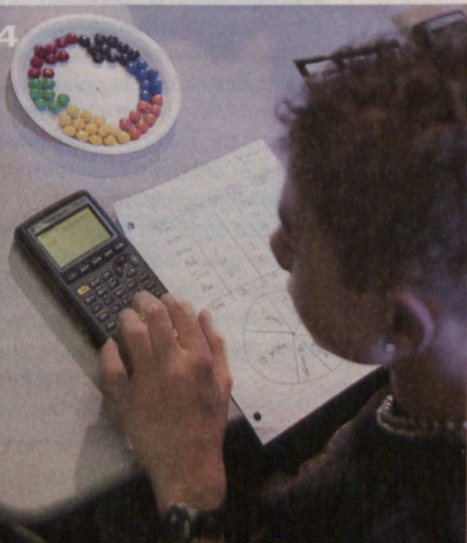
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Tim Jackson



A LONGER SCHOOL YEAR?

I'm concerned that your article "Longer Days, More Learning" (February) could give fuel to the California proposal to increase the school year for all middle school students.

The teachers who work at the school from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., 200 days a year, seemed enthusiastic. No doubt the pay was an incentive.

But a closer look at the school shows a rather idyllic setting. There's no special ed program, the students come from "families that are economically a little above average," and there is a "strict discipline code." The teachers do admit they are exhausted at the end of the day.

Most public schools don't get to pick and choose the kind of students they will teach.

I'm much more in favor of supporting after-school programs. Students get the extra help they need. Teachers who want the extra money can earn it. Everyone can still have their much-needed vacation time.

Perhaps a longer school year suits special programs. But to enforce it on all schools would be a mistake.

Diane Emmons
Hilmar, California

How does California Governor Gray Davis explain his sudden proposal to tack on another 30 days to the middle school year?

First, the state needs to make sure the state exam and the curriculum conform to each other. Right now, we are expected to test our students in March or April on areas that are not covered until May.

We are trying to teach too much in a limited time, and a lot of students, especially those "at risk," are not getting it.

We use the first month (or three) for review. Why? Because we didn't instill in the students what we wanted them to grasp last year. Why? Too many standards.

We constantly rush to make sure they have just enough knowledge of what's on the state exam to pass it.

According to the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS), students in other countries do better because they have fewer standards. These standards are

Letters

gone over in depth. No need to review the following year.

Revising the state exam and revising what and how much we teach our children are the answers to some of our educational woes. Not more school daze.

T.H. Ferraro
Mountain View, California

CHANNEL ONE

I admit, my students can recite most of the commercials on Channel One (Inside Scoop, February). But for many, this is the only time they hear about current events in a way that captures their interest.

Newspapers do not enter their lives. Channel One brings news to them in an MTV-like way. Let's use it to give them the information they need to become educated citizens!

Mary Conner
Gallup, New Mexico

I'm probably a lone wolf on this, but I vehemently disagree with your article about Channel One.

It is not the simplistic, boneheaded news program the article paints it to be. It is a superbly finetuned instrument of education.

I require my seventh grade students to take notes on the news program each day. I model different

notetaking systems on the overhead projector as we listen. My students are too busy taking notes to see commercials, and I time my writing so it happens this way.

We have had impassioned discussions, debates, essays, and research papers based on Channel One news programs.

My students can't tell you which commercials they saw on Channel One, but they can tell you about the images of earthquake devastation in India, or about the new discovery of 16 galaxies in outer space.

Margo Ungricht
Lehi, Utah

VOICE STRAIN

I was pleased to see the article on vocal strain (Health and Fitness, February). Two years ago, I was treated for vocal nodules after nearly a decade in the classroom.

The specialist who treated me said vocal nodules are a very common malady for teachers, who daily project their voice and often "work through" a sore throat or cold, further irritating the vocal cords.

My school district was quick to respond, installing a wireless voice amplification system in my room.

Parents were also very supportive, bringing me articles about stud-

ies that showed improved student performance in classrooms where voice amplification was used.

The day when voice amplification is standard classroom equipment is still far away. Until then, inexpensive amplification systems can be purchased at an electronics store.

NEA has long strived to give teachers a voice. Now, it can be said that you help to preserve their voices as well.

Rebecca Foxworth
Tracy, California

As a fourth grade teacher and a vocal musician in my church (90-minute rehearsals on Tuesday evenings!), my voice takes the same kind of beating that so many of us endure.

I do feel, though, that you omitted an important aspect of vocal health: proper vocal health habits. In "Vocal Aerobics," a tape series designed for church musicians (available from www.maranathamusic.com), Steve Bowersox likens the singer to an athlete.

He admonishes those who use their voices extensively to practice such good habits as coughing lightly and swallowing instead of repetitively clearing the throat, drinking plenty of water at room temperature (rather than cold water), and humming or using an "M" or "mom" sound to sing scales.

Just by adopting these few ideas (I warm up on my 15-minute drive to work), I have avoided hoarseness, and I have better resonance and endurance throughout my week.

Daniel Bell
Richland, Washington

TESTING

I work with an excellent education staff. Our dedication starts at the top and includes the entire faculty.

We are judged on standard tests. We were in academic emergency. I guess this meant we were not teaching our students. We were teaching English, math, science, language arts, and all other subjects to benefit our students in the future.

Now we are out of academic emergency. I guess this means we are teaching our students. Yes, we are! Teaching the test, not teaching the other things that might actually benefit them in a career. We are not a failing school, though.

Now, let's raise the standards again. This is a great concept, too. Students who had a slim chance of passing the test now have none. Oh well, just another dropout on the street with no diploma.

These students want to achieve, but our great leaders make it impossible for some. I have a question for these leaders: "Why do so many students hate school?"

Michael Edwards
Sandusky, Ohio



HIGH STAKES TESTS HAVE A PLACE

How unfortunate that your January cover story takes the typical anti-testing position. Instead of seeing tests as a challenge and learning experience, students, parents, and teachers fear tests for what the tests might show—that they aren't as smart as they'd like to think.

Certainly, the tests are not perfect. But our role as educators should be to improve standardized testing, not dismiss it.

The story highlights the following statement: "The children see reading as a testing situation. They're not going to pick up novels as adults." Based on what? Please, tell us!

Recently, a student told me our state testing was irrelevant. "I'll never have to take a test like that in real life!" This 17-year-old wizard had obviously never heard of bar or CPA exams, medical boards, even certification tests for auto mechanics.

As professionals, we need to move beyond bad-mouthing, scare tactics, and half-truths and work constructively to improve testing in our schools. We need our union to do the same.

Donald Ukrainec
Trenton, Michigan

NOT ALL CAN READ

When I read the sub-headline that states the aim is "to make all students successful readers," I rather angrily read the article (Reading, January). Thankfully, the author made no such claim.

My students are in the set "all students." They will never read. They have severe disabilities. Two do not even consistently recognize their own names. They come to school, participate in class, and are an important, vital part of the school. They sure don't read, though.

Diversity includes diversity of ability. Don't cut my students out of their rightful place in the set of "all students."

Patricia Rydeen
Minneapolis, Minnesota

TRANSFER STUDENTS

As a retired third grade teacher, I could relate to the January Dilemma, "How do you bring a transfer student up to speed?"

I used to make a folder for each student leaving my class, including a brief synopsis of books, levels, and units covered in each subject. I gave it to the student and parents, for them to give to the next teacher.

Judith Aten
Emmaus, Pennsylvania

LAZY STUDENTS

Myron Richards (Letters, January) seems to think homework should not be assigned if students are going to refuse to do it.

The whole public school philosophy seems to be to give diplomas to everyone who shows up for roll call.

The system would work better if teachers stopped making excuses for lazy students.

Al Davis
Odessa, Texas

CONTROVERSY IN CLASS

In response to T. Moore, who says, "If teachers are spending time on a controversial topic, then they are neglecting their academic responsibilities," and to Donald Alder, who says, "I think it is unethical for teachers to involve their students in politics" (Letters, January), I suggest they flip to that month's cover story

to read about Brian LeCloux's students who are "hooked on learning."

These students are enthusiastic precisely because they have been given the freedom to explore controversial subjects. One of our responsibilities as educators is to provide a forum for students to listen to one another's opinions, and to evaluate their own opinions. This is easily accomplished without any injection of the teacher's own view.

What better way to rid the classroom of apathy than to have a lively discussion of a controversial topic?

Karyn LaCroix
Montgomery Village, Maryland

SHARING BOOKS

I was gratified to read about Lori Stratton's approach to teens and reading (My Turn, January). I, too, have experienced both success and amazement at my students' willingness to read, if the material is their own choice. Okay, so we may be missing out on *Silas Marner*, but I've had the sublime pleasure of watching my students enthusiastically share books.

By incorporating book talks into the curriculum, we actually sell each other on various novels. Perhaps creating lifelong readers is more important than 100-year-old classics.

Katie Porteus
Cardington, Ohio

BOSTON PUBLIC

As one of the most powerful and influential unions in our country, where is our voice? Have we been heard on the subject of *Boston Public*, the unrealistic and blatantly controversial television show about public education in Boston?

I am outraged and appalled by the characterizations of educators in this show. Portraying teachers with hand-guns and showing intimate relations between teacher and pupil—these fly in the face of the serious work we do.

This show is damaging our professional reputations and tarnishing the image of dedicated individuals who stand and deliver quality moral and ethical education every day of our lives!

Be heard, fellow colleagues, be heard. Or be silent, and give Hollywood full license to define who we are and what we do.

Robert Talmage
Neptune, New Jersey

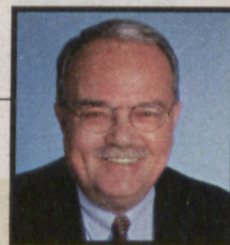
PLEASE HELP

I am compiling a book called *Dear Teacher*, a collection of notes and letters from students expressing their feelings of gratitude and appreciation to a special teacher. If you can help, please contact me at P. O. Box 2383, Chickasha, OK 73023, artmomma101@aol.com, or 405/222-1708.

Patricia Arthur
Chickasha, Oklahoma

President's Viewpoint

BY BOB CHASE



Raising the Floor

In many public schools, children receive a top-notch education. Sadly, in others, student achievement is low. We intend to change that.

The new teacher on the other end of the line was in tears. Her plea to the local Association president was an urgent one: "Please get me out of here. I can't teach another day in this school."

This distraught teacher taught fifth graders in the poorest neighborhood in the district, and nothing in her training had prepared her for the problems these children brought with them into the classroom. She was "on the brink of a total meltdown." The last straw had been a student threatening to have his ex-convict cousin "pay her a visit" if she kept "bugging" him about homework.

Hearing the desperation in the teacher's voice, the local president agreed to help.

After hanging up, he sighed. "I will get her transferred to a better school in the suburbs—I know how to work the system. But what about the students back in that inner-city school? They deserve better, too."

Exactly.

Let's be clear about this: Educating children of poverty and extreme social disadvantage is the toughest—and most compelling—challenge we face as educators. In the schools that serve the poor, every educational challenge is more pronounced, every solution harder to implement, and every success sweeter. In this context, "quick fix" is an oxymoron.

I believe the NEA and its members have a special responsibility to step up to this challenge—as problem-solvers, as partners, and, where necessary, as leaders.

To this end, NEA has published *Making Low-Performing Schools a Priority*—a step-by-step resource book to guide local educators through the school rescue process. And in the coming months, NEA will train activists to jump-start initiatives in each of their local school districts.

Yes, this will be difficult work—even heroic work—done school by school, parent by parent, and student by student. And yes, we take on this challenge knowing full well that the problems of child poverty are bigger than any school. Schools are an important part of the answer, but not the only answer. These students need better schools and better childhoods.

But there are things we can and must do as educators. And here's the good news: NEA members across the country are actively engaged in school transformations. In the Edgewood Independent School District in San Antonio, Texas, for example, the NEA affiliate has forged a strong alliance with its district, parents, and community to chart a new course. Where once there were 26 schools labeled by the state as "low-performing," now there are none.

NEA members are making a difference—from Larchmont Elementary in Takoma, Washington, to Wyandotte High in Kansas City, Kansas, to Azalea Elementary in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Of course for any school improvement plan to succeed, it must be grounded in hope. And the first condition of hope is the belief that the students can achieve. Any teacher who has lost this belief really doesn't belong in a low-performing school.

However, hope, as the old saying goes, is a good breakfast but a poor supper. To translate our hopes into concrete changes, we will also need more resources.

We owe it to the children and ourselves.

Comments? E-mail Bob Chase at BobChase@nea.org.

This will be difficult work—even heroic work—done school by school, parent by parent, and student by student.

Let's Talk

Share your ideas, comments, and opinions with NEA Today in one of five ways:

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 - By E-mail: Write to nea_today@nea.org
 - By Fax: 202/822-7206
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RETIREMENT PLANNING



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Time To Say Goodbye ... For a While

After seven years in the classroom, this California teacher decided to try writing, something she'd wanted to do since high school. The hard part was telling her students.

BY JOANNE LEVY-PREWITT

“Why don't you want to be a teacher anymore?” It came as an innocent

question from a red-haired fourth grade girl, and it had no simple answer. I struggled with my words, stammering, as I worried that any response might be misconstrued.

Lindsay had come in early to help me prepare for the school day, and her question jolted me from my early morning concentration. “It's not that I don't want to be a teacher anymore,” I told her. “It's just that I've always wanted to be a writer, and you can't be a writer if you don't have any time to write. I'm just taking a year off, Lindsay.”

There. That sounded like an honest, if evasive, reply. But she wasn't satisfied. “Don't you like being a teacher?” she asked.

“It's not that simple, Lindsay,” I said. “I love teaching, and I love the kids, but all my life I've dreamed of being a writer. I've gone through life with stories in my brain, and it just seems like now is the time to write my stories down. I want to share them with others.”

She shot me a look of betrayal, which made living with my decision all the more difficult. Teaching can be intoxicating. I found that the more I became swept up in the experience of teaching, the more powerful I felt.

I felt like a brilliant mathematician when I taught the beauty of a multiplication array. I was an explorer while trudging through pouring rain to show my fourth graders the site of the original California gold discovery.

I was Mrs. Wizard when we made soda can flashlights at Halloween to illustrate the wonder of a simple circuit. I was a mediator when I taught them “I” messages to improve communication. Yet while I wore a multitude of hats in the classroom, I still wasn't a writer.

Being an elementary school teacher has many rewards. Exciting kids about the curriculum is exhilarating, but helping them become lifelong learners is probably the greatest reward.



Fourth grade teacher Joanne Levy-Prewitt is now trying her hand at freelance writing, though she says, “I miss the kids and my colleagues.”

Last summer I ran into a former student and his mother at the grocery store.

After he said a shy, “Hello,” his mother remarked about how as a high school student he discovered his passion for history. “You must have lit a fire under him with that trip to the gold country,” she said with a chuckle. I was shocked. Whoever would have known?

The stories and anecdotes will stay with me forever. There were the irrational parents. One mother was livid that I'd asked her daughter how she felt about the death of a character in a book, insisting that I was trying to “shrink” her kid.

Another parent called a meeting with the superintendent and principal to protest the C I'd given her daughter's project. At the meeting, I presented a three-page justification for the assignment and my grading process. After my presentation, she tearfully admitted that she had made the project herself.

But there were supportive par-

ents, too. In fact, it was a parent who helped me reconcile my feelings about leaving the classroom. When I expressed doubts—I told her that I'd been raised to always contribute to society, and that I couldn't help but feel self-centered about my decision—she had wise, comforting words.

“Don't you see that by leaving the classroom you're setting an example?” she said. “You're teaching the children that you're a lifelong learner, and that it's never too late to pursue your dreams.”

On my last day of teaching, my class presented me with a gift. I could tell by the shape and heft of the package that it was framed. I unwrapped what looked like a beautiful watercolor rendering of a tree.

On closer inspection, I saw that each leaf, 27 in all, was actually a green thumbprint of each of my students. Their thumbprints formed the canopy of the tree, and not far from the tree, sitting upright on the grass, was a single red apple, the universal symbol for teachers. ✓

Joanne Levy-Prewitt is on leave from teaching and is now writing. Reach her at jklprewitt@home.com.

The photographs that appear in the pages of *NEA Today* come mostly from local photographers working for newspapers in small towns, suburbs, and cities where NEA members live and work.

Over the nearly 20 years of *NEA Today's* existence, we've discovered some excellent talent across the United States.

In the course of a year, we hire several hundred photographers. Some of our best photographers have been working for *NEA Today* on a freelance basis for 10 to 15 years.

Several work for popular mainstream publications like *USA Today*, *Time*, and *National Geographic* magazine.

We've also tapped the nation's colleges and universities for photographic talent. Two of the photos on the Innovators pages in this issue were taken by university staff photographers in Florida and North Carolina.

Once in a while, high school students break into our pages. Nebraska junior Krystle Lamprecht, who snapped a shot of students and Nebraska teacher John Street that first appeared in *USA Today*, also provided our photo on page 36 of this issue.

We're always interested in fresh talent—in both photography and graphic illustration. We're also looking to hire a greater number of minority freelance photographers and illustrators to handle our assignments.

The field of photojournalism still tends to be dominated by white males, but in the last five years or so we've been pleased to be able to display more of the work of minority and female photographers on the pages of *NEA Today*.

This is important because public schools are very diverse, and telling the public school story through pictures requires being able to see photos from many different perspectives.



Bill Fischer
editor

Beth Hoogerhuis

Bill Fischer

The Wireless

With a laptop for every student and teacher, Pennsylvania's Latrobe Junior High is virtually mobilized for success.

Got Wireless?

Use a remote (or two) to channel surf? Zap your coffee in the microwave? If so, you've got wireless!

Wireless technology uses light or radio waves instead of copper wire or cable to make things work. The same infrared rays that sound your car alarm now beam messages to palm organizers. The microwaves that pop your kernels are used for telephone relays. And when you "reach out and touch" by cell phone, you're using the same radio frequency bandwidths that make cable-free modems and computer local area networks the wireless wonders they are.

Virtually unheard of even two years ago, enhancements to cell phones, pagers, palm organizers, and pen-sized portables seem relentless. What are the wireless features today's kids crave?

- MP3 players with ear buds to record, download, convert, and listen to a personal mix of music
- On-demand E-mail and silent, short messaging by keypad or mini-keyboard
- Instant Internet access for gaming and teen-interest sites
- Device "interconnectivity": cell phones that talk to their computers, play music, send messages, and go online

The day the 1,000 laptops were deployed, students and staff at Latrobe Junior High knew they were on the front lines of the wireless revolution. And why not? After all, three-quarters of U.S. households will subscribe to a wireless service by the end of this year. And statistics show that more than 75 percent of teachers use computers every day, with the majority now using the Internet for instructional purposes.

Still, when Esther Howard first heard the revolution was coming, the veteran English teacher admits she felt more dread than excitement. "These laptops will be just like pencils—they'll lose them," she recalls thinking, "or like books—they'll damage them."

"And here we were," says Howard, "giving them an instrument so they could outsmart us." "But then I said, 'Isn't it neat?'"

COMMAND CENTRAL

Distribution began in 1999, when the school began issuing each student a "kid-proof" laptop computer that had a magnesium shell and no mouse, hard drive, or floppy drives. These seven-pound StudyPro student laptops don't need to be hooked up to any wires or plugs. They're powered by infrared cells installed in school ceilings, and their links to the Internet travel through these same infrared rays (see "Got Wireless?" box, left).

The wireless machines run standard Microsoft software, which is downloaded from the Internet, and student work is automatically backed up to the school's central server.

Howard's own laptop is command central. She can turn students' machines on or off, block Internet access, and disable spellcheckers. And when she decides to compare how students in a Montana classroom are studying *Call of the Wild*, she filters incoming E-mails through her laptop and dispatches select messages to her students.

Howard's students power up to revise their drafts of an essay. They log on, make edits, print out, and team up with classmates to proofread and get feedback. Howard circulates from student to student, screen to screen, to monitor progress.

"We really get a lot accomplished during the 40 strong minutes of class time, because the

Seventh grader Kurt Johnston is ecstatic that wireless laptops like these are standard issue for all Latrobe Junior High students.

computer allows you to work quickly," says Howard. "I can see what they've written, note their edits, and make a comment right there."

Meanwhile, in Tom Karazsia's ninth grade technology education class, students keystroke notes, design their dream car, and write a detailed newspaper ad to sell it. They check the class Web site daily to get assignments, complete vocabulary reviews, and take tests, which are automatically scored with grades that post instantly.

Should something go wrong, users can march down the hall to the Command Center, where each period a computer tech specialist works with an assigned teacher on duty who learns to troubleshoot, dismantle, and repair the computers. While students use their laptops at home for word processing, they can't access the Internet without the infrared cells. And school protocol requires students to recharge the battery overnight.

BOOT CAMP

Technical wizardry aside, the real power behind the wireless revolution at Latrobe Junior High rises from sustained teacher training and an operating system that puts teachers in control.

Rollout and training for Latrobe's 70 teachers began in December 1998, with staggered distribution to its 1,050 students completed by last fall.

Teachers are paid to attend two to three days of training at the beginning and end of each school year. There are optional summer seminars. And substitutes hold down the fort so staff can attend quarterly, on-site trainings by content area.

Howard adds that she's learned the most during monthly voluntary Collegiality Groups, during which veteran educators trade off teaching techniques for the latest tips from their tech-savvy younger colleagues.

"This school has taught me everything I know about computers," says Howard. "The younger teachers are so enthusiastic to share what they know."

Students attend their own boot camp on the care and feeding of their machines.

THE BUZZ ON LEARNING

Laptops have created a substantial change in the way instruction occurs in the classroom, says Principal John Kozusko. There's more one-on-one interaction, more collaboration, and more inquiry-based, independent study.

An independent three-year study on laptop use in schools (www.rockman.com/projects/laptop/) confirms what educators in Latrobe are documenting: Students with laptops show deeper, more flexible uses of technology; they perform better on writing assessments; and they rate their computer confidence higher.

Teachers in laptop environments report more frequent uses of student-led inquiry and collaborative work—and they indicate that it's the computers that make the difference.



Revolution



Looking on while students use their laptops to instantly revise drafts, English teacher Esther Howard insists that teaching hasn't changed, only the tools are different.

Photos by John Heller

And the community is picking up on the change. Dozens of new students are enrolling in the school, as parents from area private and parochial schools, students from other districts, and corporate executives from the nearby Sony plant opt to enlist their kids.

GLITCHES

Not all educators embraced the wireless revolution. A turnover of 16 teachers, attracted by a generous retirement package, resulted in the school hiring new teachers more adept with the technology. And Howard's concern, shared with other staff, that students would find a way to abuse the technology were realized when a student hacker tried to circumvent safeguards in order to load taboo music sites.

The counterattack was to create an "Internet Ethics Code" and "Computer Use Policy." Each year, students must write an essay demonstrating their understanding and acceptance of the documents. Abusive students are denied laptops and complete work in the school library's computer center.

Only one violation has since occurred. And the reformed hacker, assigned to the Command Center during probation, is now one of the school's greatest allies.

The specter of hordes of high-energy kids destroying their laptops or simply losing them—another staff fear—hasn't materialized. So far, only one laptop has been lost. And no

other has suffered permanent damage.

WIRED OR NOT?

With technology having so much to offer, schools are struggling with how much to spend on it, whose products to use, and how to manage it all.

Latrobe's laptop project is part of a three-year, \$2 million partnership with Georgia-based NetSchools Corporation (www.netschools.com). When the school board realized that installing six computers in each classroom and computer labs for each grade would cost nearly as much—\$1.7 million—the laptop scenario received unanimous support.

In addition to supplying the laptops, the contract provided a laser printer for each classroom, installation of the infrared system, Web content correlated to textbooks and state standards, and on-site training and technical support.

Howard can't wait for next year's overhaul of Latrobe Senior High, where she teaches half of the day.

"I love teaching, and I love books," says Howard. "Sure, I could teach without computers, but I wouldn't want to. We're giving this to our students so they can be well-prepared for the real world." ✓

—Michelle Y. Green

For more: E-mail technology coordinator Gene Cameron at gcameron@wiu.k12.pa.us or visit <http://wiu.k12.pa.us/latrobe/Latrobe%20Laptop%20Project/>.



Wireless Good, Wireless Bad

Indispensable tools or needless distractions? Increasingly, schools are being forced to choose sides in the wireless revolution by considering appropriate—and inappropriate—uses such as these:

- Handheld devices with built-in scanners monitor hallways and track attendance of a New York school's 2,400 students.
- Personal digital assistants, or PDAs, have been banned from many classrooms because students can use them to beam test answers to each other.
- English students in Maryland use PDAs to retrieve assignments, research and write reports, access online dictionaries and encyclopedias, E-mail teachers, and retrieve their grades.
- A Chicago student, who used his cell phone to send homework reminders to his home computer, also sent silent, harassing messages to classmates.
- Old cell phones are being refurbished and distributed to school bus drivers to make emergency calls.
- A California freshman was suspended after directing a laser pointer through several panes of glass and into the eyes of a teacher in another building.
- Phys ed classes in Illinois monitor nutrition and fitness and track physical exercise levels and daily caloric intake using electronic palm devices.
- Illinois students disrupted class using Communicators, \$20 pen-sized devices that can record and send messages through walls up to 100 feet away.
- A Columbine High School student made a dramatic call for help using a cell phone. Many schools now permit their use before and after school.
- A wireless parking system alerts staff to student parking infractions, and security guards can monitor non-authorized visitors and errant students.

Q&A

The New Digital Divide

Technology is changing the way students are taught. But in today's high-tech classrooms, who's teaching the teachers? David T. Gordon, editor of *The Digital Classroom: How Technology Is Changing the Way We Teach and Learn* (Harvard Education Letter), says an all-out effort is needed to train teachers on how to use and teach with technology. Otherwise, all the hardware in the world won't improve education.

What's being spent on school technology today?

Federal, state, and local authorities spent an estimated \$7 billion in 1999 on school computers, Internet access, software, and related items.

How much has been spent on teacher training?

Schools last year spent less than 5 percent of their educational technology budget on training, and teachers got, on average, four hours of training. That's appalling even if technology were static. But think of all the changes that take place in a year.

There are schools with wonderful technology that nobody knows how to use.

Research indicates that teachers in poor, rural, and urban districts get far less training, so that has an exponential effect in perpetuating a digital divide.

The myth is that putting computers into schools will directly improve learning. But in fact, teachers haven't received adequate training on how to integrate technology into daily classroom instruction. And technical support is often unavailable or insufficient.



Harvard Education Letter

Professional development is the next digital divide says expert David T. Gordon.

Computer basics aren't enough?

You wouldn't put a book on a table, look at it and say, "Gee, it isn't doing anything." The potential of that book is only realized when a caring, competent, well-trained teacher can say, "Let's learn how to read." Technology isn't a magic bullet, it's a tool.

What needs to be done to bring teachers up to speed?

It's pointless to talk about the larger-scale digital divide unless you talk about closing the digital divide that surrounds teacher training. In the next five years, there's got to be a concerted effort, as there was in creating the E-rate program, to help teachers get the training and support they need day to day.

Teachers need access to regular workshops, online workshops, discussions groups about technology.

What resources are available?

There are many terrific groups, such as the 21st Century Teachers Network, a volunteer, teacher leader-based effort (www.21CT.org); the Apple Learning Interchange (<http://ali.apple.com>) and Wide World, Harvard's online learning center (<http://Wideworld.pz.harvard.edu>).

For more: E-mail David T. Gordon at editor@edletter.org. To order *The Digital Classroom: How Technology Is Changing the Way We Teach and Learn* (\$21.95), visit www.edletter.org or call 800/513-0763.

Resources

● NEA and educators across the country have teamed up to create "Useful Web Sites for Educators 2000," a link to some of the best education technology materials on the Web. *Etools* and *Etools 2000* are two new NEA publications that showcase creative ways to deliver lessons using technology. Visit www.nea.org/technology/resource.htm

● *The Education Technology Literature Review* newsletter summarizes major education technology articles from the nation's leading education and technology journals, magazines, Web sites, and newspapers. Visit www.eschoolnews.org/stob/index.html or call 800/394-0115, x199.

● *Connecting the Bits: A Reference for Using Technology in Teaching and Learning in K-12 Classrooms* offers best practices for using computers in the classroom. The 170-page reference is free online from the NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education. Visit www.nfie.org/publications/connecting.htm.

● Intel's Education Destination is a free, non-commercial site that offers teachers and school technologists news and help in teaching with computers, technology planning and management, and professional development. Visit www.intel.com/education/destination.

● Partnering with the American Museum of Natural History, the Library of Congress, and NASA, Classroom Connect, Inc. helps K-12 teachers apply technology in classrooms through curriculum and graduate courses online. Visit www.classroom.com.

● AHA! Interactive provides Collaborative Learning Units, projects in which students in grades 6-12 use the Internet to research and resolve such issues as global warming. Visit www.ahainteractive.com.

● The Web-based Education Commission has released "The Power of the Internet for Learning: Moving from Promise to Practice," a report on the challenges of providing access to broadband communications to schools. Visit www.webcommission.org.

● *The 2001 School Technology Funding Directory, 2nd Edition* provides comprehensive listings of more than 500 grant and funding resources and grant-seeking strategies. Visit www.eschoolnews.org/stfd.

● A new Department of Education report, "Measuring Impacts and Shaping the Future," answers important questions about technology's impact on K-12 education. Visit www.ed.gov/Technology/techconf/2000/report.html.

Wired Up

The prevalence of computers and Internet access in the nation's schools, according to a report by *Education Week*.

	# of Students Per Computer	% of Schools with Internet Access						
Alabama	7.0	53	Kentucky	5.3	78	North Dakota	4.2	85
Alaska	4.5	88	Louisiana	7.4	63	Ohio	5.4	78
Arizona	5.8	67	Maine	5.8	85	Oklahoma	5.6	56
Arkansas	5.6	66	Maryland	6.6	62	Oregon	5.6	83
California	8.1	67	Massachusetts	6.1	65	Pennsylvania	5.5	60
Colorado	5.3	75	Michigan	5.9	65	Rhode Island	7.5	73
Connecticut	5.9	60	Minnesota	4.9	84	South Carolina	5.6	82
Delaware	5.3	91	Mississippi	7.0	60	South Dakota	4.2	83
District of Columbia	5.4	70	Missouri	5.2	74	Tennessee	6.7	85
Florida	5.0	68	Montana	4.4	79	Texas	5.1	69
Georgia	5.5	64	Nebraska	3.9	87	Utah	6.0	84
Hawaii	6.7	82	Nevada	7.3	61	Vermont	5.6	78
Idaho	5.3	86	New Hampshire	6.8	79	Virginia	5.4	72
Illinois	5.9	71	New Jersey	5.7	66	Washington	5.0	84
Indiana	4.5	74	New Mexico	5.5	62	West Virginia	4.7	81
Iowa	4.7	80	New York	6.3	60	Wisconsin	4.6	70
Kansas	4.1	65	North Carolina	6.0	56	Wyoming	3.5	79
						United States	5.7	71

Source: Education Week, Technology Counts '99 report.





GAIL WASHBURN teaches art at Rangeland Elementary School in Louisville, Kentucky. A 21-year teaching veteran, she recently served on a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards committee, writing elementary art standards.

Should Cell Phones and Pagers Be Allowed In School?



DON MACK is computer lab facilitator and chair of the learning media services department at Laramie High School in Wyoming. He has taught for 23 years. He edits the Albany County Education Association newsletter and is Wyoming's representative to the NEA Resolutions Committee.

yes

okay. We, as educators, want them to be more involved with their kids. And cell phones are one way to accomplish that.

But there's more than the parents' dilemma. Let's look at the bigger picture. Times are changing. E-commerce is on the rise. In the future, there will be telephones on wristwatches, backpacks, notebooks. Will we ban them?

I remember grounding my son once and telling him he couldn't use the telephone. Hearing laughter and talking coming from his room, I tiptoed up the steps and quickly opened the door. To my surprise, he was on his computer, talking to his friends face to face, voice to voice.

The future is now. Computers are cell phones and pagers. Students will find a way to use them, just as our generation used the once-prohibited calculators and tape recorders.

Finally, we say we should teach by example. Can we as teachers live without our cell phones and pagers?

How many times has our school telephone system blacked-out because of heavy rains and strong winds (better known as long-winded teachers on the only available phone line)?

In case of emergencies, cell phones can be the only lifeline out of the school facility. Remember Columbine?

Not all cellular technology interferes with learning. With the newest technology, students can use their cell phones to connect to the Internet.

Let's find ways like these to incorporate cellular technology into our classroom curriculum. ✓

no

Increasingly, authorities have outlawed the use of cell phones by motorists because of the risk of accidents. In a school classroom, we don't typically have students driving automobiles, but we conduct a wide variety of activities that require every bit as much attention from the student as traffic would from a motorist.

Schools are islands of learning where a teacher and a group of students are provided the opportunity to interact, interrupted only by the passing bell.

Education professionals have campaigned long and hard to eliminate the incessant intercom and paper barrage that accosts the classroom. In many places, we have been successful, and interruptions from secretaries, counselors, and administrators have been cut to a bare minimum.

The incursion of cell phones and beepers could deal a severe setback to any progress that's been made to bar interruptions.

Early this year, a colleague's presentation was disrupted when a student's cell phone, carried into the classroom in a backpack, began ringing. Initially, both the teacher and students attempted to ignore the distraction and continued working. But after several rings, the owner of the cell phone apologized and answered the call.

The call was of a social nature, and the student hung up as quickly as possible. But the flow of instruction was disrupted, and valuable learning time was lost. This isn't an isolated occurrence.

Setting the phone to vibrate instead of ring is not enough. Whether the phone beeps,

squawks, belts out an N'Sync tune, or simply vibrates, the pesky little device will continue to demand attention. Very few adults will let a call go unanswered. And my observations of my own children and students indicate that an unanswered phone call drives them up a wall.

If the phone is answered, all learning comes to a screeching halt while a classroom full of ears listens to one side of a conversation and imagines the dialogue that must be coming from the invisible intruder.

By their very nature, these gadgets insist on being the controlling attraction in the classroom. For some students, the distraction comes because they don't have a cell phone or pager and wish they did. These items are also attractive to the thieves who may inhabit our hallways and prey on the unsuspecting.

School curriculums are created to provide the best possible education for the students. When a phone call interrupts the classroom regimen, it destroys the planning and instruction that have been carefully crafted by the educator, be it lecture, group work, test taking, or silent seat work.

Policies and procedures have been adopted and office personnel have been well trained in the answering of school phones and the delivery of messages. There's little in the way of emergency or critical information that can't get from a school secretary to a student in a matter of seconds, should the need arise. In our school, there is a pay phone for students who must place a call.

Cell phones and pagers have no place among the possessions that a student brings to school. ✓

Mom's working late tonight, son. Please wait for me by the front door of your school immediately after basketball practice.

"Don't play around in the gym, because I have another Association meeting this evening and your dad is working second shift."

If only I could give this message to my son!

I was always taught to be the most I could be. Get involved in your job and community, volunteer, give back. I have taught my students and children to have that same work ethic and attitude. How disconnected I feel when I can't reach my son at school to tell him of a change of plans.

If only I could talk to him now.

How many times have I left messages with an already overworked office secretary? And how often have I left notes in my school mailbox, unread for days?

I am a teacher, and I believe disruptive beeps and rings should be turned off and the phone set to vibrate mode during class. But in this great age of E-technology, I should be able to reach my son.

There are more single parents, divorced custodial parents, and workaholic parents than ever. More moms are choosing careers over staying at home. More dads are choosing to commute out-of-town for better jobs.

All this is juggled with after-school classes, sports, clubs, detention—what are parents to do?

We now have daycares at the workplace. Personal Internet camera surveillance at child-care facilities seems to improve employee morale and attendance.

Let's face it—parents work better when they know their kids are

What's Your Opinion?

Should Cell Phones and Pagers Be Allowed In School?

To vote, visit our Web site at www.nea.org/neatoday and see the results instantly.

Are Assigned Summer Reading Lists Obsolete?

The tally on this Debate question from the last issue of *NEA Today*:

17% Yes 83% No

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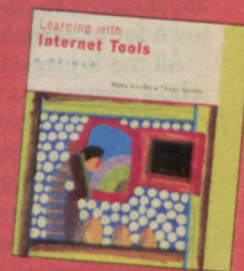
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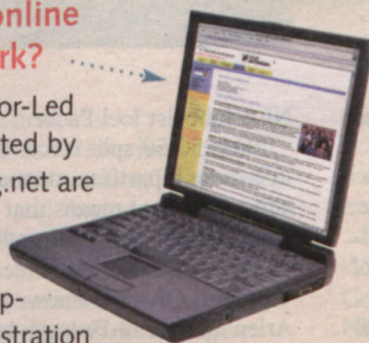
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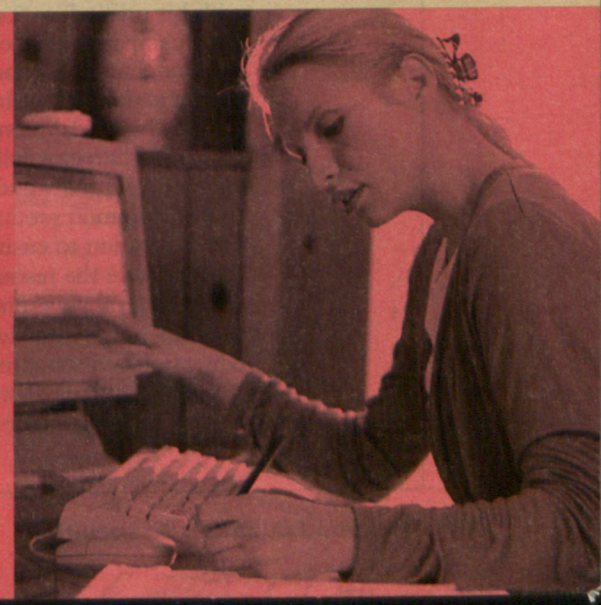
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Educational Priorities? Ask the Experts—Us!

NEA members have a unique opportunity to work with the new President, Congress on legislation.

Ask any educator about the needs of America's public schools, and you'll get an endless list. Boil it all down to five key points—focusing on more resources for low-performing schools, special education, school modernization, teacher quality, and early childhood education—and you've got NEA's legislative priorities for the new Congress.

If ever there was a year to be quick and concise about priorities, this is it.

In a country split down the middle on practically everything, public education has emerged as the one key issue on which new President George W. Bush can achieve national consensus and win groundbreaking legislation during his critical first year in office.

That's why NEA isn't wasting time.

Right before Inauguration Day, NEA delivered its legislative priorities to Bush's transition team. In just his third

funding and teacher professional development," says Wilson. "It's unrealistic to expect that local districts and states can tackle these expensive issues alone, without a full partnership with the federal government, especially in a time of a \$350 billion federal surplus."

On both sides of the aisle in the new Congress, lawmakers will be looking to NEA's 2.6 million members as "the experts on what it will take to improve schools," adds NEA Government Relations Director Mary Elizabeth Teasley. "We're officially a bipartisan organization. Where we focus on issues, not partisan politics, we'll be in a good place with this new Congress."

Public education is already in a pretty good place in the 107th Congress, thanks to:

■ Progress made in the last Congress.

Last December, the departing 106th Congress—deluged with messages from thousands of NEA cyber-lobbyists—increased funding for federal education

"NEA members have the greatest ideas for turning schools around. Lawmakers need to hear them."

—NEA Executive Director John Wilson

day in office, the President responded with his own education program, fulfilling a campaign pledge to put student achievement and school improvement on the nation's front burner.

"This historical moment," says NEA Executive Director John Wilson, "presents NEA with a wonderful opportunity to find common ground with the new administration to ensure that all public schools have the resources they need."

The federal government has never done its "fair share" to promote public education, Wilson stresses.

"This new President could do a great service by focusing on issues like IDEA

programs by a record \$6.6 billion, or 18 percent. On the funding list: everything from a \$323 million increase for the federal class-size reduction program to the first-time funding of up to \$1.2 billion in emergency public school repairs.

■ **An enhanced role for friends of public education.** The new House of Representatives retains a highly conservative leadership, still capable of swerving toward regressive causes like teacher basic competency testing or merit pay. But the newly elected Senate is divided evenly between Democrats and Republicans, "making it easier to achieve real debate on educational issues," says

NEA lobbyist Joel Packer.

"This 50-50 split forces senators to act in a more bipartisan manner," Packer adds, "and that means that several moderate Republican senators long supported by NEA, including James Jeffords of Vermont, Olympia Snowe of Maine, and Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, will have more influence in debates on the needs of public schools."

■ **A negative public verdict on vouchers.** One of President Bush's less inspired education proposals, federally funded vouchers for students in low-performing schools, will have tough sledding in this Congress, thanks in large part to the shock wave generated by voters' defeat of voucher ballot initiatives—by 70-30 margins—last November in California and Michigan.

"For a new President who has pledged to unite the nation and end bitter partisanship, this voucher program is sure to divide us," warns NEA President Bob Chase. "Bush has an opportunity to invest in action that produces real results in troubled schools, such as reducing class size, repairing buildings, providing extra help for students who need it, and enhancing teacher quality. Let's invest in programs that have bipartisan support."

■ **A broad consensus on school needs.** Throughout the Presidential campaign, Bush stressed themes like child literacy, early learning, higher standards, teacher quality, and closure of the "achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their peers." While NEA members may not agree with all of the President's approaches to these issues, we're on the same track, and there's definitely room for compromise.

■ **NEA's vast pool of lobbyists—including you.** President Bush has stressed that he's open to suggestions on education legislation. That's a signal for NEA leaders and lobbyists, including members just like you, to educate Republicans and Democrats alike on





J.D. Schwalm

Sandy Schaeffer

School employees just like you will be NEA's most effective lobbyists as the new Congress takes up education legislation. You can help advance NEA's legislative priorities (below) by telling lawmakers about the specific needs of your students and school. After all, you're the expert on education—and Congress needs your input.

our legislative priorities.

"Many of our members have been in tough classroom situations," notes NEA Exec Wilson, "and have come up with the greatest ideas for turning schools around. Lawmakers need to hear about these solutions and how they can help."

"Our five crisply written legislative priorities allow us to efficiently mobilize NEA staff and resources, work for more resources for schools, and make us accountable in Washington, DC to

our members on the front lines," Wilson concludes. "But we can't move these priorities without the help of every teacher and ESP in our ranks." ✓

What You Can Do

Go to www.nea.org/lac for more on NEA's legislative priorities and bills moving through Congress. Sign up to become an NEA cyber-lobbyist, and then urge lawmakers to incorporate NEA's priorities into legislation.

NEA's Five Legislative Priorities for the 107th Congress

1. Low-Performing Schools

Our nation's top education priority should be to turn around low-performing schools, typically serving lower-income rural and urban communities.

NEA recommends that the federal government place the highest priority on addressing the needs of low-performing schools, including ensuring full funding of Title I to reach all eligible students.

A portion of Title I funds should focus on increased accountability through alignment of goals, standards, curriculums, and assessments; strengthened professional development; and the setting of standards for continual student improvement.

2. Full Special Education Funding

Although the federal government has committed to providing 40 percent of the average nationwide per-pupil expenditure to help meet the cost of educating students with disabilities, the federal share currently totals only around 15 percent.

NEA recommends "ramping up" to full funding of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act—IDEA—within six years. Once reached, full

funding should be automatic, free from the unpredictable discretionary appropriations process.

3. Teacher Quality

Ensuring a qualified teacher in every classroom must be a central part of any agenda to strengthen public education and maximize student achievement.

NEA recommends a series of targeted new initiatives to help states and districts hire, train, and retain quality teachers. Federal investment should be combined with state funds for statewide, district-wide, or individual school initiatives that demonstrate proof or promise of success in recruiting and retaining quality teachers.

4. School Modernization

America's schools are in desperate need of repair and renovation. Nationwide, unmet school needs are estimated to total more than \$300 billion.

NEA recommends a federal/state/local partnership to address school infrastructure and technology needs. The federal government should help states meet the interest costs on state or local bonds, through either tax credits or direct interest subsidies. In addition,

Heroes & Zeroes

Before he left office in January, President Bill Clinton awarded the Presidential Citizens Medal to Don Cameron, who served as NEA executive director from 1983 to 2000. The medal is bestowed on citizens who have performed "exemplary deeds of service" to the nation.

Cameron, who saw NEA membership double during his term to 2.6 million members, "has been a pioneer, a visionary, and a strong voice for education since his earliest days in the classroom," says NEA President Bob Chase.



Sandy Schaeffer

Despite a heavy snowfall the last weekend of December, support staffers in Plainfield, New Jersey worked lots of overtime to haul the white stuff from school grounds—the kind of work that career ESP routinely do and do well.

Funny thing: When Plainfield reopened its 14 campuses on January 2, neighboring South Plainfield's six schools were still closed. That shortsighted district, you see, pays a contractor, Sodexo Marriott Services, to operate its custodial and maintenance operations.

You can buy school "services," but can you ever really buy dedication?

Indiana Governor Frank O'Bannon not only supports public education and opposes vouchers, he really loves kids. Back when he was a state senator and a lieutenant governor, O'Bannon held ice cream socials for local youngsters and even built a "children's garden" in his inner-city yard.

Nowadays, the governor reads to children during the Read Across America celebration and keeps 'em coming back to Indianapolis. O'Bannon—soon to chair the National Education Goals Panel—invited all Indiana fourth graders to recent Inauguration Day ceremonies, and 25,000 of them showed up!

the emergency repair grant program created last year by Congress should be expanded to meet more of our most urgent needs.

5. Early Childhood Education

How children learn and are cared for before entering kindergarten makes a huge difference in how well they perform in school.

NEA recommends that the federal government, in partnership with states, make substantial, targeted new investments to ensure that every child enters school ready to learn.

Specifically, NEA supports a comprehensive package including universal preschool, full funding of Head Start, expansion of the Child Care and Development Block Grant and Title I preschool services, and expansion and refundability of the Dependent Care Tax Credit. ✓

Speaking the Truth, Battling Consequences

When her school district retaliated after Louise Kolb backed a parent, Kolb fought back and won.

New Jersey third grade teacher Louise Kolb isn't one to boast about her classroom technique. When pressed, she'll concede, at best: "I do a pretty good job—I take each child as an individual, meet his or her needs as best I can, and bring the best out of each."

This 27-year veteran, who teaches at Mansfield Elementary in rural Warren County, likes to communicate regularly with parents. "After all," says this moth-

effectively with a special needs child back in September 1993, even with two periods of daily help from a special education teacher. This eight-year-old boy lived with severe Tourette's Syndrome and other disabilities.

"He really had a difficult time functioning in the classroom," Kolb recalls. "His mother always felt that he needed more than our school could provide, and she was right."

The mother went to a state administrative law court to win placement of her child in a specialized school outside

the Mansfield Township district.

To Kolb's surprise, the plaintiff and her lawyer appeared one day at school to serve her with a subpoena to testify in this case.

Kolb felt strongly that there was only one version of the facts, so she declined to "prepare" her court testimony with school board attorney David Wallace and Superintendent Carol Burns.

"That means you're the mother's star witness," snapped the

lawyer. "We are now adversaries."

During four separate court hearings in 1994, Wallace grilled Kolb on the witness stand for an entire day. Her evidence, including a daily log of the child's progress and his collected classwork, was helpful but not decisive to the outcome of the case.

In June 1994, before the administrative law judge issued a decision, Kolb had a formal evaluation conference with Burns and received a satisfactory rating, a green light to receive a normal pay increment. "I was told I worked

well with the school's Child Study Team, and nothing was said about my court appearance," Kolb notes.

But when the judge ruled that the child should be transferred at the district's expense to a special school, this teacher got a rude shock.

At the beginning of the 1994-95 school year, the district withheld her increment, falsely charging that Kolb disobeyed orders on conferencing with the mother and failed to communicate about the child's condition with the Child Study Team.

Mike Mulkeen, the UniServ rep who advised and supported Kolb every step of the way, calls this disciplinary action "retaliation," pure and simple. "I thought the district would back down on Louise when they lost the student's case," says Mulkeen, now retired. "But they were so arrogant, they took it to the end. This was about doing her in."

Not about to let that happen, Mulkeen teamed up with New Jersey Education Association attorney Nancy Oxfeld to fight a two-front battle to win back Kolb's stolen increment and clear her good name.

These advocates filed a grievance on behalf of the Mansfield Education Association, and they helped Kolb file a lawsuit under New Jersey's Conscientious Employee Protection Act. That law prohibits employers from retaliating against employees for providing information to a public body "conducting an investigation, hearing, or inquiry" into any employer violation of a law, administrative rule, or regulation.

Bit by bit, the union's two-pronged strategy paid off.

In late 1999, NJEA won the arbitration case despite three last-ditch employer appeals of the arbitrator's award. And Kolb was awarded five years of back increments, albeit without interest.

In early 2000, Kolb's lawsuit made its way to New Jersey Superior Court, where a jury decided on its own to award the plaintiff \$50,000 from the Mansfield Township school board and \$5,000 from Superintendent Burns.

"It's unheard of to fine a superintendent," notes UniServ rep Mulkeen. "But the jury found her to be negligent. Carol Burns knew what kind of teacher Louise was, but she kept silent."

Louise Kolb hadn't envisioned dollar signs when she entered that courtroom.

"This was never a money issue," says Kolb. "I was told I did something wrong and I never did, and I always



Louise Kolb, center, survived her seven-year ordeal with the support of husband David, left, and her children Charles and Alice.

er of two, "parents want to know what's going on in their children's classrooms."

All in all, Kolb is a typical elementary teacher. She thrives around kids and, role model that she is, puts a premium on telling the truth.

And the truth is Kolb couldn't work

SCHOOL SAFETY: Between 1995 and 1999, the percentage of students fearing they would be attacked while traveling to and from school fell from 7 percent to 4 percent. For more: www.nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/crime2000safety.asp?nav=4.

TEENS AND AIDS: 91 percent of teens know they can get AIDS from unprotected sexual intercourse. School is by far their main source of information about AIDS. Parents are a distant second. For more: www.kff.org/content/2000/3092/Teensurveyonhiv.pdf.

YELLOW BUSES: 57 percent of American public school children are transported to school at a cost of nearly \$11 billion, or \$456 per student transported, as of the 1996-97 school year. For more: www.nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=67.

RISING IQ: IQ scores are going up in all parts of the world where the tests are given. Today, one-quarter of test-takers score as high as the top 2 percent did in 1932. For more: www.sigmaxi.org/amsci/articles/97articles/neisser.html.

**THE
BOTTOM
LINE**

admit when I'm wrong. I felt I was used as a scapegoat, I wanted my name cleared, and I wanted a jury to hear all this and decide."

"Louise is the quintessential elementary teacher," observes Mulkeen. "She just wanted somebody to say she was right after five years of hassle and grief. She was fighting for a child, not looking to embarrass the administration."

Now that the dust has settled, Kolb explains what motivated her.

"I was worried that this child wouldn't get help in later grades, so I did what had to be done," she says.

"I was worried that this child wouldn't get help in later grades, so I did what had to be done."

—Third grade teacher Louise Kolb

"Children shouldn't just be passed through the system—I never looked at a child that way."

Kolb's greater reward has come with the knowledge that the student, who spent three years in a school specializing in Tourette's Syndrome, has transitioned back to the mainstream. Now in the 10th grade, he takes algebra, plays in a school band, and can participate more fully in school activities.

"His mother knew that he could grow up to be a functioning member of society, and he surely did," says Kolb.

And what kept this educator functioning during seven years of grief?

Kolb credits her husband, David, also a teacher at Mansfield Elementary, and her children for their "unrelenting support," and stresses that "Mike Mulkeen and Nancy Oxfeld were my guardian angels throughout this whole thing—they stood behind me 100 percent."

Though Kolb has been a longtime NEA member, she never was what people would consider an "activist." Now, she's fully aware that NEA stands up for all members, including the "average" member.

Mindful that "fear of retribution" sometimes prevents teachers from fight-

ing for students who can't speak for themselves, Kolb has sound advice for every NEA member:

"If you get in this situation, call your UniServ rep. He or she is in the position to guide, support, and help the average member."

"After all," says Kolb, "that's why we pay Association dues."

—Dave Winans, with *New Jersey Education Association* editor Dawn Hiltner ✓

For more information, contact NJEA UniServ Assistant Director Carol Rosenfeld at crosenfeld@njea.org.

Doers Profile



MIKE JETTE

■ Name and profession:

Mike Jette, high school science teacher.

■ NEA local affiliate:

Merrimack Valley Federation of Teachers/NEA-New Hampshire

■ Position:

Chief negotiator

■ **Most recent accomplishment:** The Merrimack Valley school district has long made the lowest employer contribution toward health care in New Hampshire, making it uncompetitive with districts paying a negotiated percentage of health benefits.

But late last year, Jette and his team finally pried off Merrimack Valley's health "dollar cap," negotiating a schedule of escalating employer percentage contributions over the next three years.

There's more work to be done to implement this agreement, but this local's negotiators have laid the groundwork by "humanizing" the need for improved health coverage. The bargaining team produced a photo-packed PowerPoint slide presentation that dramatized the effect of skyrocketing health costs on 10 individual teachers and their families.

To the soothing music of Yanni, Jette narrated this presentation before both district negotiators and the full school board. One powerful segment introduced them to a new alternative education teacher—a graduate of local schools—and his pregnant wife.

While eager to remain in the district, this educator had received a step increase from \$24,000 to \$25,080, while his family health premium would climb by \$3,185. Under federal guidelines, his new child would qualify for reduced-price lunch and milk.

"We wanted school board members to walk away educated on how health benefits impact the retention of quality staff," notes Jette. "We definitely succeeded. There was silence in the room when the presentation was completed."

■ **Words of wisdom:** "We felt strongly that we must make this bargaining presentation personal, and not leave it as a bunch of numbers on a spreadsheet. Pictures have a larger impact on adult learners than numbers, and PowerPoint gives you control over the presentation. But before you put across members' stories in this way, you need to make sure they're comfortable with being publicly profiled."

"It's important to note that the idea for this presentation came from a new member of the negotiating team, Peggy Halacy. She worked well with the rest of the negotiating team—Rich Krajcik, Ray Bailey, Mike LaClair, Trudy Wheeler, and Mary Estee.

"While we always need people with past bargaining experience, it's very good to also bring a fresh viewpoint to the table—and Peggy provided that."

(E-mail Mike Jette at Mjette@mv.k12.nh.us.)

THE COURTS HAVE SPOKEN...

... In Georgia, a Federal District Court jury has awarded \$300,000 to the Walton County Bus Drivers Association and its co-presidents, Cynthia White and Faye Ramey, for retaliation suffered after the local raised employee concerns at school board meetings. White and Ramey lost their jobs in 1996 after they attempted to notify management of student discipline problems on buses and serious vehicle safety concerns—including use of forklifts rather than racks to lift buses, soft brakes, slipping transmissions, and missing first-aid kits.

"This ruling should be an emphatic wake-up call to school districts throughout the state that they can't prevent local Associations from speaking out," says Terrence Thomas, co-general counsel of the Georgia Association of Educators. "Nor can they prevent one person from representing the Association in matters that concern the school system."

... In Maine, the state Supreme Court has upheld an arbitration award reinstating fired teacher Tim Barlow and compensating him for \$25,000 in lost pay and benefits. Barlow was dismissed without just cause by the Lamoine school board for allegedly "mishandling" a disruptive student in the lunchroom.

Maine Education Association UniServ Director Brian Kilroy says that Barlow's case brings out the importance of clean "just cause" language and binding arbitration in contracts. "Without these protections," he says, "Tim Barlow would not have been vindicated and restored to his job." ✓

UNIFORMS: As of 1996-97, 3 percent of public schools required students to wear uniforms. Uniforms were much more common in schools with many low-income or minority students. For more: <http://www.nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=50>.

A YEAR WITH SUBS: On any given day, from 8 to 13 percent of all American school children are taught by a substitute. That totals almost a full year out of a child's academic life. For more: www.geocities.com/athens/agora/4532/canews4-1999.htm.

WOMEN AND COMPUTERS: Women entering college are much less likely to plan careers in computer programming—2 percent for women vs. 9 percent for men—and the gap is growing. For more: www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/heri.html.

DRUG COSTS: American seniors' prescription drug bills will probably more than double in the next decade, from \$1,205 to \$2,810, according to Families USA, a national organization for health care consumers. For more: www.familiesusa.org/drugod.pdf.

'We're All Together Now'

In one Colorado district, teachers and ESP unite in the same NEA local affiliate. The payoffs: added respect and even better work with kids.

Jackie Brungardt and Candi Epperson have worked in the same small elementary school in Westminster, Colorado, for 12 years, helping handicapped children get a good education.

Brungardt, a paraprofessional who works with severely disabled students, and Epperson, a special education teacher, have become great friends over the years. Now they're in the same union, thanks to a support staff organizing drive in this Denver suburb by the Westminster Education Association.

Brungardt reports that support staffers, from custodians to bus drivers, are already enjoying more job security and respect. Epperson stresses that the teachers benefit, too. They now have a stronger union, with deeper roots in the community.

Educational support personnel are joining NEA affiliates at a rapid pace.

NEA's ESP membership is now more than 325,000, and growing 20 percent per year. In most cases, however, support staffers and teachers are in separate NEA local affiliates, notes Karen Mahurin, the Alaska school secretary who chairs NEA's National Council for Educational Support Professionals.

Westminster went a different route. A single union for all public education employees made better sense to WEA leaders like Epperson and local President Cherylin Peniston, a middle school social studies teacher.

"ESP were being asked to do more and more with students," says Peniston. "We work shoulder to shoulder with them, and we see how hard they work."

Brungardt has one of the toughest assignments in the Westminster school system, working with children who have severe physical disabilities, many in wheelchairs because of cerebral palsy. One of her students is on oxygen. Others require tube feeding.

Brungardt loves her work. "I see them happy in school, which could never have happened before. I see them included in classrooms. They come to school smiling, and I'm part of their day," she says.

"But it's definitely challenging. It can



Election-day rain and snow didn't dampen the enthusiasm of these union supporters in Westminster, Colorado. ESP voted overwhelmingly to bargain alongside teachers.

be hard just to communicate, trying to find out what's wrong.

"When I started 12 years ago," Brungardt recalls, "we had something like 200 percent turnover per year. I'm the only one left. We were the underdogs, pretty much. There was nobody to push for us. It's great to have a union."

Epperson wanted WEA to include ESP because she feels support staff have not been treated fairly.

"They do huge amounts of overtime with no help and very little compensation," says Epperson. "They are frustrated and exhausted. Most of them have second jobs because they can't afford to live on what the district pays them."

"Because of that, we can't get people to fill these jobs," she says. "I've always had excellent aides, but some teachers have waited months without one."

The move to expand the WEA began more than a year ago. The local surveyed its members and found that more than 90 percent wanted to invite ESP to join.

Meanwhile, a meeting of the support staff showed overwhelming preference for WEA over an independent Colorado union of school support staff.

Rather than wait for a formal representation election, the teachers decided to open their organization to ESP right away. They expanded WEA's governing board from 11 to 16, adding an ESP vice president and four other ESP members. The new board then set about recruiting ESP building reps.

Barbara Schmidt, a bus driver who became the new WEA vice president, says those moves convinced ESP that the teachers wanted them in the organization as equals. Jackie Brungardt acted on that signal by volunteering to be the building rep for her school.

In September, WEA launched a full-scale organizing drive, with leaflets and small, personal meetings. There was no real opposition, but Association leaders were concerned about turnout because the union needed at least 30 percent support to represent the support staff.

THE BOTTOM LINE

DRUG MONEY: States spent 13 percent of their budgets in 1998 dealing with drug problems in one way or other, from law enforcement to welfare payments. Very little of that went for prevention and treatment. For more: www.casacolumbia.org/.

SCREEN TIME: Children aged two through 17 who have computers, video games, and a television averaged 4 hours, 48 minutes a day in front of a screen. Those with just a television spent 3 hours 40 minutes. For more: www.futureofchildren.org.

POLITICS: A Public Agenda poll found 59 percent agree that "Elections are generally for sale to the candidate who can raise the most money." For more: www.publicagenda.org/issues/pcc_detail.cfm?issue_type=campaign_finance&list=1.

PARAS: There are more than 930,000 paraeducators, and the number is growing. Some special education students spend more time with paras than teachers. But paraeducators generally don't get the training they need. For more: www.naesp.org/sswin01.html.



Tired union supporters celebrated their 255-10 win after election ballots were counted.

The weather refused to cooperate on election day, last Halloween. It rained and snowed, a disincentive to come out and vote at one central polling site. One very sick bus driver insisted on

port staff alike as "educators."

Now, a new all-staff contract is being hammered out by a unified teacher-ESP bargaining team.

Epperson notes that while teachers all over the district supported the ESP organizing drive, those from small schools like hers were the most enthusiastic. "In big schools, teachers don't see other teachers, much less aides," she said. "They don't have the personal connection that we have. Here, we're family. And we're all together now."

Peniston says the whole school system will benefit from having ESP in the Association because support staffers often have strong community roots, which can translate into political support for funding.

Schmidt began working as a driver after being an active parent in the district for many years, and says she's typical. "Most people I know here are parents and taxpayers. They started off as volunteers."

Jackie Brungardt's priorities for the first contract include raises and getting the district to pay tuition for courses so she can learn more about how to help her students.

"When adults are happier with their jobs, they work even better with kids."

—Bus driver Barbara Schmidt

voting before heading for her doctor's office. When the votes were counted that night, WEA had won by 255-10, out of 485 eligible to vote.

The new ESP members of the Westminster Education Association don't have their first contract yet, but change is already happening.

The superintendent is putting support staff on district planning committees. And he invited ESP to the annual beginning-of-the-year staff meeting, where he referred to teachers and sup-

"We're all here for the same thing: taking care of the kids," says Schmidt.

She believes children are already benefiting from ESP organization. "We're happier," she explains, "and when adults are happier with their jobs, they work even better with kids." ✓

—Alain Jehlen

For more information, call Westminster Education Association President Cheryl Peniston at 303/427-1734 or E-mail her at WEACEANEA@aol.com.

YOUR DUES DID IT

■ A new NEA handbook, *Making Low-Performing Schools a Priority: An Association Resource Guide*, is now available on NEA's Web site. This guide, drawn from the work of an NEA task force on low-performing schools, offers practical tips for identifying a school in crisis, turning it around, and sustaining ongoing improvement. Go to www.nea.org/issues/lowperf/priorityschools/.

■ Got tax questions but can't find answers? Point your Web browser to the NEA *Educators' Tax Guide 2000*, produced for folks just like you. The guide gives clear explanations of federal and state income tax law and offers advice on itemized deductions, tax-sheltered investments, and the best tax forms to use. Go to www.nea.org/00taxguide/. ✓

KUDOS TO...

Louisianans Tie Yellow Ribbons

... Members of the **Louisiana Association of Educators** are displaying yellow ribbons to focus public attention on the need to boost school employee pay. And they're peppering state leaders with E-mail messages, starting with Governor Mike Foster. "It seems only reasonable," LAE President Carol Davis recently wrote Foster, "that the state that is asking us to lift student achievement to national averages should be more than willing to lift our salaries to the Southern average."

... **Education Minnesota** has won an arbitration decision that upholds a state law guaranteeing school site committees' control of staff professional development dollars. At issue was the LaPorte superintendent's refusal to allow three teachers to attend a workshop that conformed with district professional development guidelines and was approved by the site committee. This administrator's rationale: "budget constraints" and a "staff shortage."

... After two months of intensive organizing, members of the **Pine Bluff (Arkansas) Education Association** have won bargaining recognition from their school board. PBEA—representing teachers, librarians, and other certified personnel—intends to bargain over issues like respect for teachers and pay for supplementary duties.

... State employee members of **MEA-MFT** (formerly the Montana Education Association-Montana Federation of Teachers) have ratified a statewide agreement providing a 4 percent pay increase each year over two years, increases in employer insurance contributions, opportunities to negotiate on the bargaining unit level for pay adjustments in high-cost regions, and a new Labor Relations Training Fund to train managers and union members in bargaining and conflict resolution.

... In arctic Greenland, the teachers' union, **IMAK**, and the government have signed a new contract with the help of a mediator. Now IMAK is withdrawing its appeal to American educators to boycott Greenlandic teaching positions. "The teachers of Greenland are very grateful for your support," IMAK leader Claus Jochimsen tells NEA members, "and will not forget your readiness to show solidarity." ✓

DIGITAL DIVIDE: 70 percent of children aged two to 17 have access to computers. In families with incomes under \$20,000, 22 percent of children have access. With incomes more than \$75,000, it's 91 percent. For more: www.futureofchildren.org.

WOMEN LEADERS: There are only five countries in which women hold more than 30 percent of the seats in parliament: Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and the Netherlands. For more: <http://prorev.com/stats.htm#foreign>.

DROPOUTS: 21.6 percent of Hispanic students, 18.3 percent of African Americans, and 11.5 percent of whites and others drop out of high school. Boys drop out more than girls. For more: www.law.harvard.edu/civilrights/publications/dropout.html.

GRADING SCHOOLS: 70 percent of parents give their child's school an A or B. 47 percent of the public give their local schools an A or B. But only 20 percent say the nation's schools rate an A or B. For more: www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kpol0009.htm.

Standing Up to Anti-Semitism

The Justice Department backs a Michigan teacher in a landmark religious harassment case.

In an unusual move, the U.S. Department of Justice has intervened on behalf of former high school teacher and NEA member Louis Owen in a religious harassment case filed against the L'Anse Area Schools in L'Anse, Michigan.

Owen's lawsuit, filed in March 2000, alleges that the district violated

his rights under federal law by failing to take any action to stop a campaign of threats and anti-Semitic harassment perpetrated by students.

Owen, who is Jewish, taught history at the L'Anse High School for more than 30 years.

According to the lawsuit, the harassment began during the 1996-97 school year when, on several occasions, students drew swastikas on his classroom walls. The harassment escalated over the next two years into overt threats.

In one incident, Owen discovered that a student had written this hate-filled message on a desk in his classroom:

"WHITE POWER"
"KILL OWEN"
"KKK"
"SKINHEAD"
"DIE JEWS"

Later, Owen found a hangman's noose on the doorknob in his classroom and the following inscription on a locker near his room: "Some people are alive because it [is] illegal to kill them."

According to his lawsuit, Owen complained to his principal and superintendent about each of these incidents, but they ignored his requests for help. In fact, the principal rhetorically asked Owen whether the noose incident was just a "prank."

Frustrated, Owen filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in April 1999, and then sued the school district in federal court.

His lawsuit alleges that the district failed to respond appropriately to his complaints of religious harassment in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Title VII is the federal law prohibiting employment discrimination on the basis of religion, as well as sex, race, color, and national origin.

"This is an important case," said Owen's attorney, Patricia Stamler. "School districts need to get the message that religious harassment—like any other form of harassment—is illegal. And if they don't respond to it in a

prompt and appropriate manner, they're going to get sued."

The U.S. Department of Justice agrees.

In September 2000, Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Bill Lann Lee certified Owen's lawsuit as a matter of "public importance" and filed papers in federal court to intervene on his behalf.

"School districts need to get the message that religious harassment—like any other form of harassment—is illegal."

— Michigan attorney Patricia Stamler

According to the court papers, the Justice Department wants to ensure that school districts nationwide reasonably respond to this form of harassment.

What's a reasonable response?

Schools should investigate all credible reports of harassment and take immediate and appropriate corrective action, said Stamler.

In his lawsuit, Owen is seeking damages, as well as an injunction requiring the district to enact effective anti-harassment policies in the future.

Sadly, he won't benefit from these policies.

Owen no longer works for the district. After taking extended medical leave due to the harassment, he retired from teaching shortly after the lawsuit was filed.

A jury trial is scheduled in *Owen v. L'Anse Area Schools* for August 20, 2001. ✓

—Cynthia M. Chmielewski
NEA Office of General Counsel

Fallout from the Boy Scout Decision

Last fall, *NEA Today* reported on the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Boy Scouts of America v. Dale*. In a 5-4 ruling, the Court upheld the right of the Boy Scouts to deny membership to gay youth and leaders.

But backlash against the Boy Scouts indicates that the group may pay a high price for this legal victory.

Already companies such as Chase Manhattan Bank, Levi Strauss, and Textron Inc. have cut financial support for the Boy Scouts. The city of Los Angeles has severed its ties to the group. And Reform Judaism and the Methodist and Episcopal Churches have called for an end to the anti-gay ban.

Additionally, at least 14 school districts nationwide, with approximately 2,613 schools, have terminated their sponsorship of Boy Scout troops, including the nation's largest public school district, the New York City Public School System.

In December, New York City School Chancellor Harold Levy barred all schools within the district from sponsoring Boy Scout troops or recruiting members during school hours.

"The board has a policy against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and my job is to enforce the board's policy," Levy explained.

Under his decision, however, the Boy Scouts will be permitted to continue using school space after hours.

That's not the case in Broward County, Florida. Last November, the school board unanimously voted to bar the Boy Scouts from using school property because the group's ban on gays violates a nondiscrimination provision in the agreement to use school facilities.

This decision has raised the ire of the Boy Scouts, which recently filed a lawsuit to stop the district. The group claims the board has infringed its rights of free expression and equal access to public facilities.

NEA is monitoring this litigation. Check this space for updates. —C.M.C.

THE BOTTOM LINE

KIDS IN MOTION: 17 percent of children aged five to nine, and 14 percent of those aged 10 to 14, moved during 1990-1991, according to the Census Bureau. Low-income, urban children move more often. For more: www.naes.org/comm/c1100.htm.

VOUCHERS: In a Public Agenda poll, 63 percent said they know little or nothing about school vouchers. 80 percent felt they needed to learn more before forming an opinion. For more: www.publicagenda.org/specials/vouchers/voucherintro.htm.

SCHOOL LUNCHES: In 2000, nearly 27 million children received free or reduced-price lunches, 57 percent of the meals served in the National School Lunch Program. The income limit is \$31,543 for a family of four. For more: www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/.

HEALTH IN AMERICA: The U.S. health system spends more of the gross national product than any other country but ranks 37th out of 191 nations in performance, says the World Health Organization. For more: www.who.int/whr/2000/en/press_release.htm.

New Teachers and Social Justice

Noted educator and writer *Herbert Kohl* has created a teacher prep program that harnesses the energy of young teachers who want to do good in the world.

Herbert Kohl may be best known for his progressive work in education and his insightful writing—including *The Discipline of Hope* and *36 Children*. Now, he's running a new teacher preparation program at the University of San Francisco's School of Education. The Center for Teaching Excellence and Social Justice, which welcomed its first class of students last fall, is helping inner-city teachers obtain their teaching credentials and their master's degrees. *NEA Today* writer Dina S. Gómez spoke recently with Kohl about the Center.

What's the mission of the Center for Teacher Excellence and Social Justice?

I wanted to establish an advanced teacher training program that would attract excited young people into the teaching profession, young people who have a social vision and care deeply about children.

Our mission is to produce progressive, reform-minded teachers who will be empowered to help schools and urban centers throughout the nation. My ultimate goal is to create a learning community of future education leaders, teachers who won't be afraid to be both educational and political leaders.

Why the focus on young teachers?

If we cannot sustain young, passionate teachers, then education will surely become mechanical.

Throughout my career, I have observed many young teachers who leave the field after just a couple years because they lose that original inspiration. I wanted to capture the enormous amount of energy and intelligence that exists among so many new teachers, and give them a place to discuss current issues in an environment where they learn to teach well.

Through seminars, class observations, and hands-on work in urban communities and reform-minded schools, we want to show these teachers that they are the creative center in the educational process, that they should have an enormous say in how education develops at their school and in this country.

What type of teachers have made up your first class of students?

I personally recruited and interviewed all 30 students, and every one is ideal for this program. They've all taught at least one year in poor communities. I knew that if they had at least one year of experience in the field, they would ask the right questions when they got into the program.

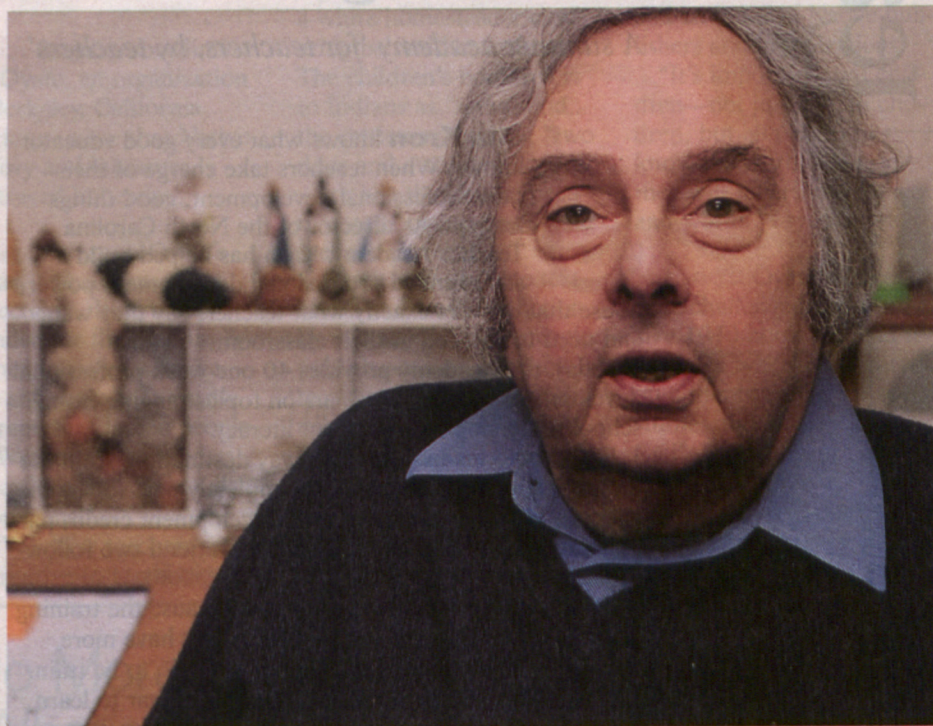
They are passionate about children and aren't afraid to deal with issues of social justice. In fact, they welcome and invite the opportunities to heal and enhance the communities where they work. Many of them are consistently motivated by social inequities.

How does the Center's program differ from teacher prep programs?

Like other programs out there, we focus on issues that specifically have to do with being a good teacher. We don't forget that teaching is a learned art. What makes us different is that we combine those lessons with a focus on social justice issues.

For example, we teach about being aware of the role race plays in our schools. We prepare our students to teach in a social context where they will encounter many different forms of racism, including other teachers who say, 'Don't expect too much from these kids,' or 'Don't push them too hard because they can't afford to go to college.'

It's what I call the discipline of hope: the refusal to accept limits on what students can learn or on what teachers can do to facilitate learning.



David Bacon

RESOURCES

■ For more about the Center for Teaching Excellence and Social Justice, visit www.soe.usfca.edu/ctesj/.

■ *The Discipline of Hope* by Herbert Kohl (New Press, www.thenewpress.com), \$16.95.

■ *Rethinking Schools* publications, www.rethinkingschools.org/.

■ *The Unfinished Journey: Restructuring Schools in a Diverse Society* by Laurie Olsen (California Tomorrow, www.californiatomorrow.org), \$9.95.

We also explore gender issues, and homophobia in schools. I don't think you get that in a regular education program.

How do you see the Center affecting public education in this country?

The Center has aligned itself with various organizations and people who want to keep progressive, hopeful, and socially responsible ideas alive in our schools. The students are constantly being exposed to progressive educators and policymakers, as well as community groups and organizations that are working to improve schools.

It's my hope that they spread what they are learning to affect change in our schools. I would also hope that as passionate professionals, they won't allow the degradation of public education to become a cliché in the media or allow reform ideas to escape action by becoming simple buzzwords.

How's the program's first year gone so far?

I'm proud that we are finding success in integrating the academic work with the teaching practice, which doesn't always come easily.

In a philosophy of education class I teach, for example, students wrote the usual papers and read philosophy books. But for their final project, I asked them to be fully dimensional. One young woman's project will inspire me for many years to come. She asked her young students to write poetry, and then she turned those poems into a quilt, which is now hanging in our office.

By focusing on good practice and driving home sustained commitment, I have no doubt that we will have a lasting impact on this new generation of teachers.

What advice would you offer new teachers?

If I were to tell new teachers anything, it would be to function on the basis of hope rather than on optimism. Optimism is a conviction that things will work out for the best. Hope is a deep faith that the struggle for things to work out well might eventually succeed.

Optimism will almost certainly fail, but hope never dies. ✓

Putting Teachers In Charge Of Training

A summer academy 'for teachers, by teachers'

Julia Kron knows what every good educator knows: When teachers take charge of their own professional development, good things happen. As director of the North Carolina Teacher Academy, Kron has helped build a state-funded professional development powerhouse that delivers exactly what teachers say they want and need to succeed in their classrooms.

Today, the Academy provides 40 one-week professional development summer seminars on topics ranging from school leadership to adolescent literacy.

Each session is held at a getaway destination, from the mountains to the coast, and is completely paid for by the state. In addition to professional development credit, participants receive a small stipend. They attend two follow-up meetings later in the year.

Kron says the Academy is popular because the training is delivered by teachers, for teachers. "We have more than 200 classroom teachers whom we train to be trainers," she says. "They come throughout the year to learn the latest research and to speak with experts so they can deliver to their colleagues what is current and accurate. The result is real teachers relating with real teachers about research findings and classroom issues."

The Academy also offers whole-school staff development.

When Kron headed the North Carolina Association of Educators a decade ago, the Academy was merely a dream. But working hand-in-hand with education-friendly leaders, Kron and other educators saw that dream become reality when the General Assembly funded it with \$3.8 million in 1993.

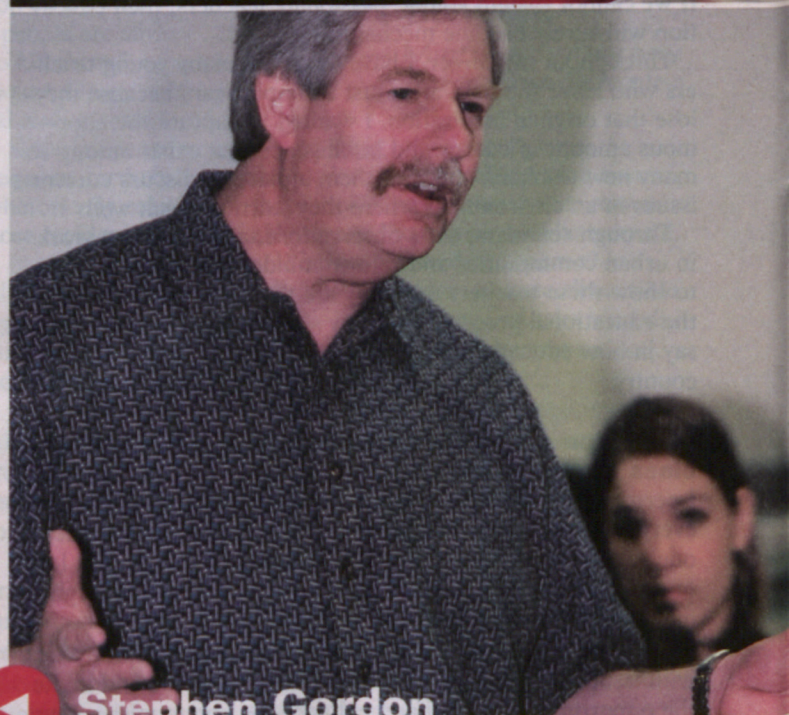
"This is what happens when teachers are treated as professionals and allowed to drive their own professional development programs," Kron says. "I am so thankful that our state leaders place a priority on education."

Impact: Nearly 19,000 teachers and principals have been trained through the Teacher Academy. They represent 1,582 schools from all 100 North Carolina counties.

For More: Visit www.ga.unc.edu/NCTA/.



Julia Kron



Stephen Gordon

Andres Astarias

Helping New Teachers Succeed

Stephen Gordon of the University of South Florida has been working with beginning teachers for more than a decade. In his new book, *How To Help Beginning Teachers Succeed*, Gordon and co-author Susan Maxey explore why beginning teachers struggle and provide ideas on how veteran educators and school systems can help.

Why is this topic important?

Up to 50 percent of new teachers leave the profession in the first five years. But most new teachers who take part in well-designed beginning teacher assistance programs stay in the profession and feel better about themselves as teachers.

There is a clear difference between surface teacher assistance programs and ones that truly impact a new teacher's career. Many new teachers who don't get help but do stay in the profession develop low-level survival practices and eventually get stuck in a rut.

What is needed for an effective program?

Many states and districts mandate new teacher assistance programs, which is a step in the right direction. But all too often, these programs consist of a mentor teacher introducing him or herself to the new teacher, and that's the end of it.

In a good program, careful attention is paid to recruiting outstanding mentors. These mentors are given time to work with new teachers. There's also a team approach

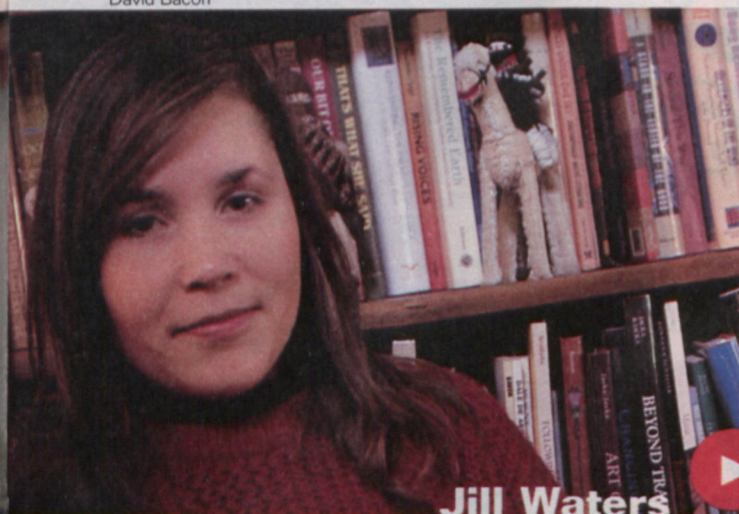
in the entire school to help new teachers.

How can your book help?

Different schools need different things. The book offers a variety of options.

For More:

Order *How To Help Beginning Teachers Succeed* (2nd edition), \$13.95, from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, www.ascd.org, or 800/933-ASCD.



Jill Waters

Zapping Indian Stereotypes

Innovator: Jill Waters

Job: Projects coordinator for Oyate, an organization in Berkeley, California, working to see that Native history and literature is portrayed honestly

Bright Idea: Oyate's library features two book collections: those recommended for their culturally authentic view of Native life, and those that greatly misrepresent Indian people. Jill Waters hopes one day the collection will be culled to only one.

"We offer teachers an alternative to textbooks

and other materials that are culturally inaccurate and disrespectful," says Waters.

For example, a 1940 Caldecott Award-winner portrays line drawings of Indians stealing, a bandana-wearing Negro sweeping them out the door, and a white homesteader cowering behind her in fear. The children's book refers to Indians as "tame" and the settlers as owning "two dogs and a colored boy."

It's just the kind of negative stereotyping that Oyate seeks to correct.

Oyate staff evaluate textbooks and works of fiction by and about Native people, publish reviews, conduct teacher workshops, and distribute a catalog of books, tapes, videos, and other resources, emphasizing the work of Native authors and illustrators.

In Through Indian Eyes:

The Native Experience in Books for Children, Oyate editors Beverly Slapin and Doris Seale present reviews of 100 children's books by and about Indian peoples, a guide to evaluating literature for anti-Indian bias, a recommended bibliography, and an index of Native publishers and organizations.

"It's important that children—not just Indian children, but all children—know the truth, because they will inherit our lives and world," says Waters.

Impact: Oyate successfully challenged the offensive 1940 book and had it removed when it appeared on a literature list for social studies and history in California last year.

For more: E-mail oyate@oyate.org, or visit www.oyate.org.



Ann Hein

No More 'What's for Lunch?'

Innovator: Ann Hein

Job: Paraprofessional, Orange Elementary School, Waterloo, Iowa

Bright Idea: Ask an elementary school educator what the hardest part of the day is, and you may get a surprising answer: morning lunch counts.

But Ann Hein is helping ease the burden of getting straight and quick answers about students' lunch preferences.

With the "Fun Food Lunch Count Graph,"

young children make visual choices. As they enter their classrooms, they see cards with photographs of the day's lunch choices on a bulletin board. They place a Velcro-wooden spoon with their name on it next to their choice.

The invention is saving teachers nationwide precious time normally spent answering the repeated question, "What's for lunch?"

Kathy Rech, an Orange Elementary kindergarten teacher, calls it a lifesaver. "This program is invaluable for a student with limited reading skills, for an ESL child, and for the stressed teacher," she says.

The system is also designed to teach about graphs. When all the stu-

dents have chosen their lunches, the cards and spoons form a graph showing which lunch option is most popular.

Teachers can track popularity on monthly graphs.

Hein created the system four years ago. Today, it contains 65 cards with pictures of typical school lunch entrees, 13 blank cards, 30 wooden spoons, and graphing charts.

Impact: Hein says, "I've received positive feedback from teachers across the country."

For More: Visit www.webspawner.com/users/grandmaannpro/ or E-mail Hein at grandmaannpro@home.com.



NEA Innovator

Communicating with Charter Schools

Innovator: Suzanne Flores

Job: NEA staffer coordinating work with affiliates to facilitate whole-school change

Bright Idea: Public school educators and charter schools usually go together like oil and water—at best. But charter schools are public schools, ones that often have useful ideas to share, as well as much to learn from other public schools.

So staffers from NEA's Teaching and Learn-

ing unit set out to develop guidelines to help these two wary groups learn together, in the interest of improving education for all children.

With research help from SRI International, and cooperation from 10 charter schools, these NEA staffers created Project Connect, a two-year effort to develop ways to improve communication between charter schools and other public schools.

Not surprisingly, they were met with suspicion and disbelief. The first time the NEA staff presented Project Connect, at a workshop during a charter school conference in 1997, nobody showed up.

But they persevered, and when they tried again 18 months later, they filled the room twice.

Now the team has written a set of concrete recommendations, *Sharing Ideas and Practices: A Handbook for Charter Schools*, based on what was learned from Project Connect and other effective programs for improving schools.

"The simple act of sharing information within and among schools can create amazing innovation," says Suzanne Flores, the program manager. "Working with charter schools and other schools of innovation can help us improve student achievement."

For More: Find *Sharing Ideas and Practices: A Handbook for Charter Schools* at www.nea.org/issues/charter/projconnect/fulltxt.html. From there, you can also access an informative charter schools Q&A.

studies have confirmed that calculators don't keep children from learning number facts. But she says teachers need good professional development if they are to use calculators well.

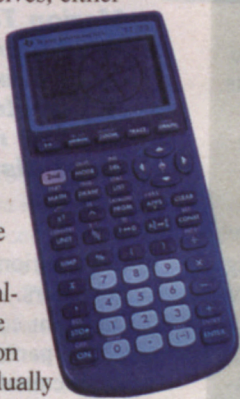
"I use calculators to enhance, investigate, do more. They don't replace other ways of doing math."

—Douglas Tucker
eighth grade teacher

"We have to ask, 'Will the calculator help my kids understand the material?'" says Hagelberger. "This is a tool we never used in school ourselves, either in K-12 or in college. So how can we learn to use it effectively, and not have it become the crutch the general public is fearful of?" A one- or two-hour class—even a full day of training—isn't enough, she says.

"Teachers need to see calculators demonstrated, use them in class, and reflect on their practice, both individually and with colleagues," says Hagelberger. "This takes time." ✓

—Alain Jehlen



For more: E-mail Hagelberger at hagelberger@anoka.k12.mn.us, Tucker at doug_tucker@dpsk12.org, or Pamela Matthews of NEA's Teaching and Learning unit at pmatthews@nea.org. Visit the NCTM Web site at www.nctm.org.

to \$20, "or whatever you can afford."

In the year I have been involved with Inner City Outings, I've taken my kids on about a dozen trips.

We've been camping, backpacking in the Sierras, sea kayaking, whale watching, and sleigh riding, and we went on an excursion to San Francisco Bay for International Migratory Bird Day.

There are almost 50 ICO local groups across the United States and Canada, conducting as many as 700 outings a year.

For more about Inner City Outings, contact ICO National coordinator Debra Asher, 415/977-5568, E-mail debra.asher@sierraclub.org.

Or contact Lawrence Volpe, lvolpe@fmsd.k12.ca.us, or visit <http://www.sierraclub.org/ico/>.

[DILEMMA]

What do you do when students' late work hours affect their studies?

taught in inner-city high schools where many of my students went directly from school to work. They did not get off work until 10 p.m. or later. Since classes started at 7:15 a.m., they had no time for homework or outside assignments and were often so tired that keeping them awake was a real problem. Often both their grades and their health suffered.

First, I talked with the students about cutting down their hours, but most felt they had to work to help support themselves and others in the family. They were afraid they would be fired if they asked to work fewer hours.

Next I talked to their parents. Most realized their child's grades were suffering, but there was no other choice. I felt that students were being victimized by employers who couldn't find anyone else to work such late hours for such low pay, so I started writing letters to legislators. A bill was finally passed in the state legislature to limit the hours of working students. (It contained a provision, however, that parents could request these limits be waived, and no one ever verified the parents' signature.)

When nothing else worked, I called or went to the students' place of employment and explained the situation to the manager. In most cases, that worked. I worried that students would resent my interfering, but they knew I cared about them, and many expressed their appreciation. I even had students and parents asking me to speak to employers about reducing work hours.

Jo Walters
Retired
Chattanooga, Tennessee

I allow students to re-do work they have turned in to me on time. They know that they can turn in something and make it better later if time and too many other commitments kept excellence from their grasp on the given day it was due. This helps students stay positive even when they are overwhelmed with work.

I set a firm rule of accepting no late work even if the student is absent unless they or a parent call me personally to inform me that they are extremely ill. I have an answering machine on my school phone and give all students my home number, which is also tended by a machine. Both machines have a time/date stamp.

I emphasize to students and parents how this is preparation for the workplace and a lifelong skill. The self-management needed to get work in on time is the most important learning many students can do.

Leslie Van Leishout
Theater arts teacher
Olympia, Washington

I give students their weekly homework assignments on Monday, and they have until Thursday to complete them. They know ahead of time what they need to do and when it needs to be done by. This helps my college-bound students budget their time and learn better time-management skills. Students who have to work an extra shift just let me know ahead of time to get an extension. When a reading assignment is due the next day, I encourage students to take their books to work and read during their break. I have found that if I am flexible and understanding, my students tend to live up to my expectations of them.

Laura Ann Curran
Junior and senior English teacher
Belleville, New Jersey

When I see that students' late work hours are affecting their studies, I call their parents to voice my concern. Most parents in our area are very cooperative and appreciate my calling. They talk with their children and frequently have them cut back on the number of hours they are working or make them quit working until vacation time.

Marjorie Rios
Spanish teacher
Livingston, Tennessee

Got an Answer?

How do you handle chronic tardiness?

E-mail your answer to dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org. Or send by regular mail, or fax to 202/822-7206. Please include your name, city, state, and job title. Published respondents will receive an NEA Today mug!



Ted Pitts

Calculators in The Classroom

Teachers figure they're valuable for relating complex problems, not 7×8 .

On Valentine's Day, Bonnie Hagelberger's first graders at the Monroe Elementary School in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, give a valentine to each other and to the teacher. So how many valentines are there in the whole class?

Hagelberger's six- and seven-year-olds can tackle that problem, although they can't yet solve it with paper and pencil. They also estimate the number of children in the school. They even begin thinking about negative numbers.

Hagelberger helps these children stretch their mathematical thinking with the aid of a powerful tool—the hand calculator.

Although still controversial, calculators are now common in American schools, according to Lee Stiff, president of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, which has strongly promoted them. Calculators are relatively scarce in first grade, but by fourth and fifth grade, they are widely used.

At the Martin Luther King, Jr. Efficacy Academy in Denver, Colorado, Douglas Tucker has used calculators with eighth graders for a unit on the ratios and proportions of the human body. They found some of the Statue of Liberty's dimensions on the Web and used them to calculate some that weren't listed.

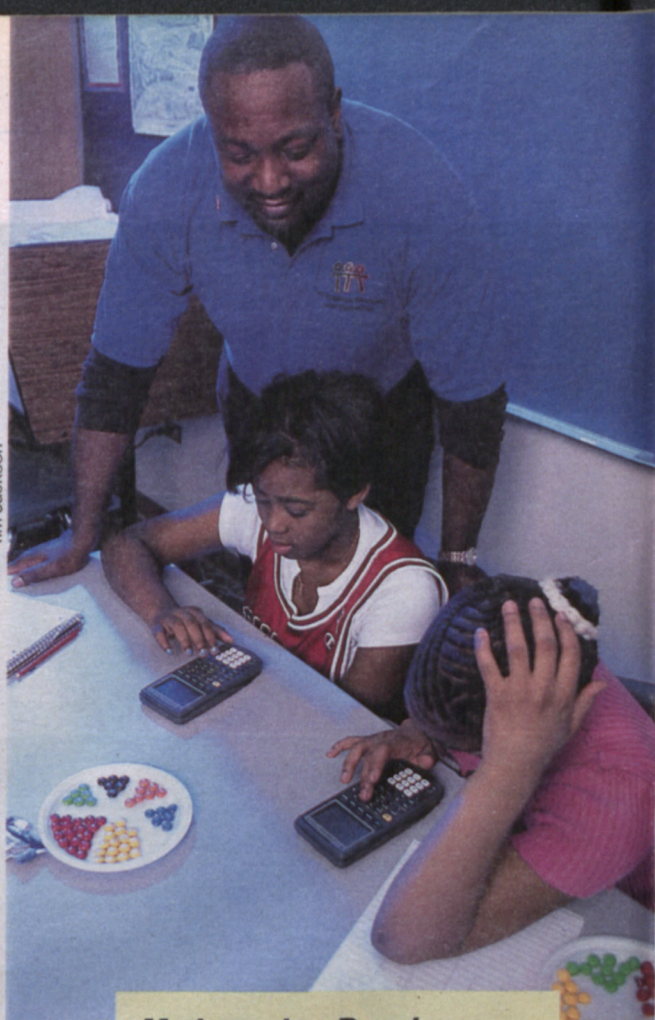
They've also done a secret-person investigation in which they try to guess the identity of someone in the school by calculating dimensions, like height, from other body measurements. These problems help students understand that ratios exist in the real world, not just in math books, Tucker explains.

"I use calculators to enhance, investigate, do more. They don't replace other ways of doing math. They reinforce them," says Tucker.

Tucker got his own introduction to calculators after a difficult first year of teaching. "I had classroom management issues—typical first-year teacher stuff," he recalls. "I was uncomfortable going page by page in the book. The students didn't like it, and I didn't like it, but I didn't know another way because that's how I learned." His principal suggested a summer in-service program, and there he learned how to make his math classes more interesting with calculators.

Despite their popularity with many math teachers and students, calculators are still controversial. NCTM leader Stiff says most of the opposition centers on the early grades. Some teachers and parents are afraid students will turn to calculators instead of learning basic number facts.

Tim Jackson



Math teacher Douglas Tucker says calculators let his middle school students tackle tougher math problems from the real world.

NCTM, Stiff explains, does want children to learn their number facts.

"Today's students should be able to do what their parents did, but they should also do more, taking advantage of tools their parents didn't have," he says.

Tucker says he teaches children how to decide when it's appropriate to use a calculator and when it isn't. "I say to them, 'Would you use your bicycle to get from the bedroom to the bathroom? Or would you use it to visit somebody on another street? It's the same with calculators.'"

Hagelberger says more than 100

How I Did It

Lawrence Volpe
Seven Trees School
fifth grade teacher
San Jose, California

I found a way to take my inner-city kids on wonderful excursions, with lots of help from the Sierra Club.



In my first year of teaching, I wanted to get my inner-city kids into the outdoors.

I organized, planned, shopped, and rented camping gear and a van, so that I could take 13 students to a national forest for a camping wilderness

experience.

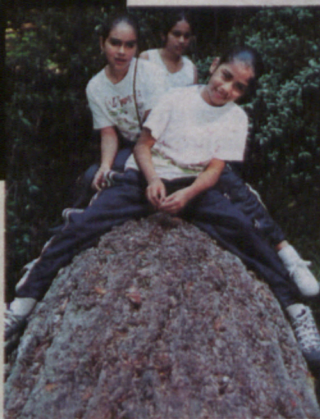
I did all the work myself, and it was tough!

It was well worth it, though. I had parents of three students on the trip—and they still go on my trips, three years later.

But it was too much work.

Searching for an alternative, I found Inner City Outings, a part of the Sierra

Club that provides outdoor experiences for kids who would not otherwise have them.



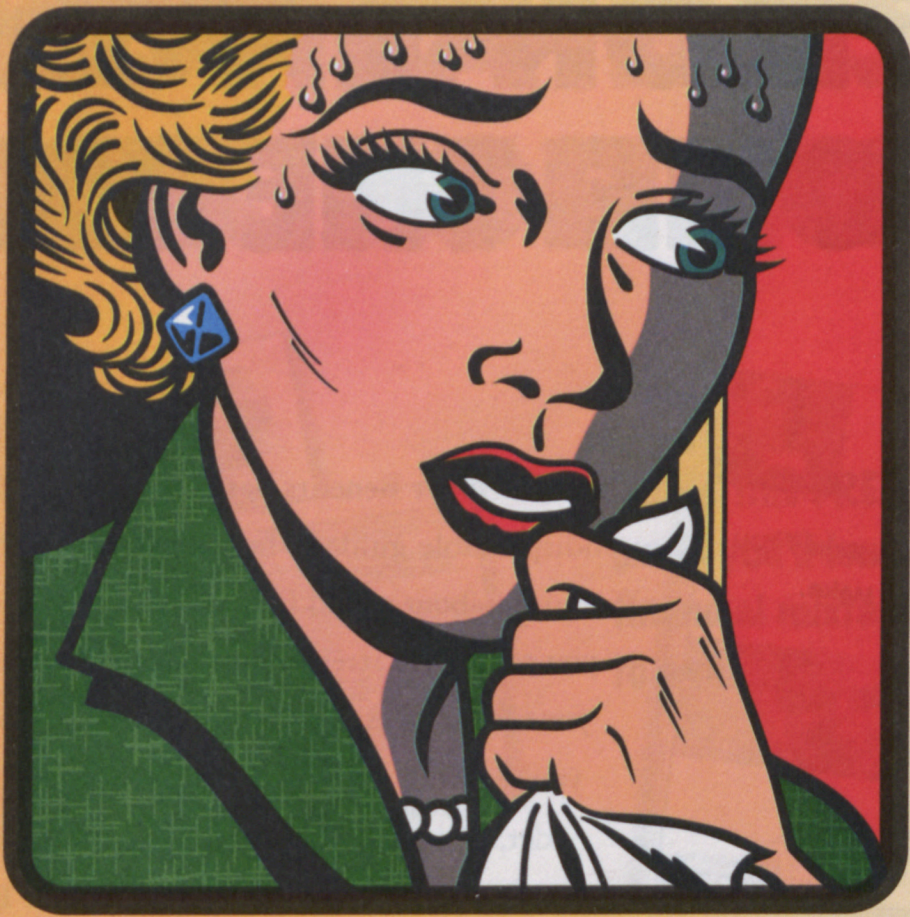
The program's philosophy is that the wilderness exists as a resource for everyone, and all people should have access to it. Students develop their interpersonal skills and self-esteem through teamwork and an active relationship with the outdoors.

Inner City Outings supplies all the necessary gear for outdoor adventures. They provide well-trained leaders with experience and a love for the outdoors—at least two come on each trip in case something goes wrong.

If you're not a trained leader, you can go as a volunteer.

The Sierra Club also provides liability insurance.

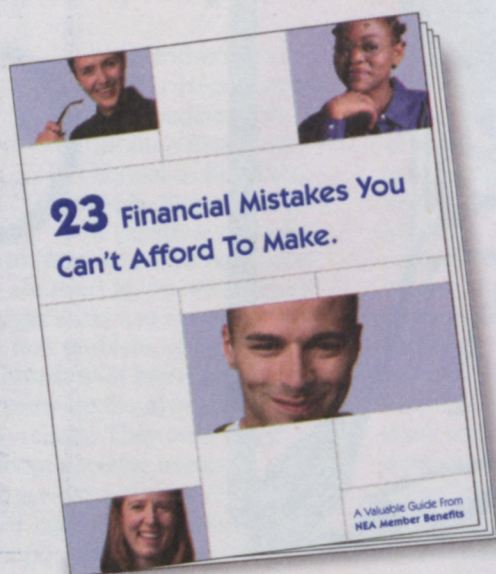
Although the Sierra Club pays most of the expenses, I ask students to contribute \$5



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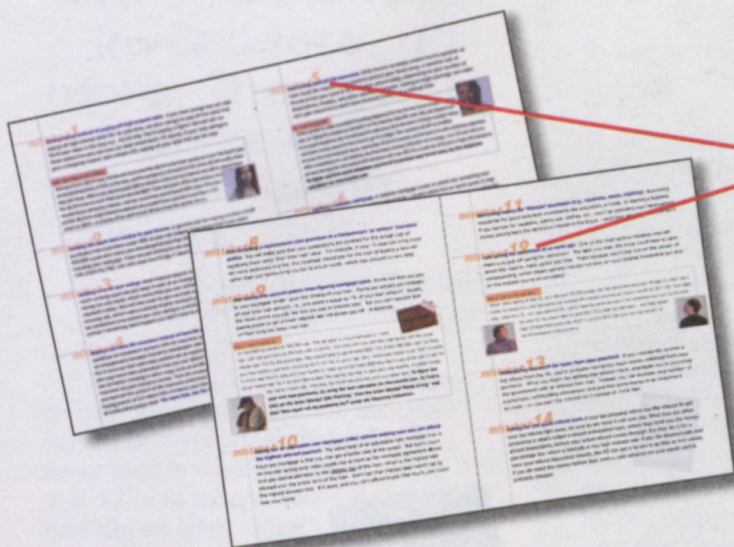
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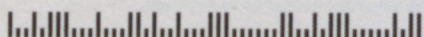
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Can't We All Just Get Along?

Hoosier teachers and administrators build mutual trust and boost student achievement.

The small city of Marion, Indiana, home to several large factories, witnessed some long, bitter strikes in the '70s and '80s, complete with mass arrests of picketers and union leaders. Not in front of its plants, but in front of its public schools.

Warlike labor relations prevailed in the Marion district until the mid-'90s, reports UniServ Director Sharon Casey.

"When I arrived here in 1990," she recalls, "120 grievances had been filed, 30 of which went to arbitration. The head of the American Arbitration Association regional office couldn't believe our local Association. We had the thickest file in his office, with 350 cases!"

Well, times change, and so have relations in Marion. In 1995, the district hired a progressive new superintendent, Charles Coleman, and worked with the Marion Teachers Association to forge a collaborative partnership grounded in interest-based bargaining. That's a process through which the parties identify common concerns, build mutual



Tom Strickland

trust, and use open communications to resolve problems and reach agreements.

This partnership, which remains strong under the leadership of current Superintendent Gene Denisar, has turned this 6,100-student district around in the face of big-city challenges, including the loss of industry, declining tax rates, and a growing number of low income students.

Today, student test scores are rising, suspensions are down, and the graduation rate has increased, and that's just for starters.

Over the past six years, leaders of the 450-member MTA and district administrators have used the interest-based process to tackle every issue that can pop up in a school system.

This relationship starts with a labor-management Communications Committee that irons out problems before they become grievances and extends to a series of joint panels that carefully research individual issues and

Marion Teachers Association President Judy Creviston and Superintendent Gene Denisar meet regularly to solve district problems.

devise solutions acceptable to all school stakeholders.

One joint committee, composed of teachers, parents, and administrators, has implemented a new, earlier elementary schedule more suited to young risers: 8:00 a.m. to 2:35 p.m. "It's research-based," notes MTA President Judy Creviston. "We haven't seen the results yet—the latest student test results aren't in—but the kids like this schedule better."

Another panel has studied grade-level alignment among elementary, middle, and high schools and discovered the need for a smoother transition between each new level, notes Creviston, a remedial math and language arts teacher at

Idea Exchange

120-Minute Club

An excellent incentive to get my fourth graders to do their homework is the "120-Minute Club." Each child receives a monthly calendar taped to his or her desk. When the assigned homework comes back to class on the day due, the child receives a sticker in recognition of a job well done. Once the child fills in the calendar with stickers, without missing a day, the child goes into my treasure chest. Each time the whole class turns in the homework for the day, the class earns five minutes. When 120 minutes are reached, the class picks a movie of their choice (with my approval) and we have a movie day with popcorn.

This idea has worked wonderfully, plus each child is able to keep and see progress each month.

Louise Swider
Cummington, Massachusetts

Art Screen Saver

I try to incorporate art into all content areas. Having an art gallery on our class screen saver shows we value art, enriches cultural awareness, and gives students great ideas for writing and creating their own artwork. They also read about the artists and the countries the artists are from, which enhances our immigration and global society curriculum.

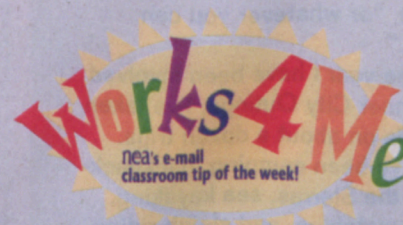
Tracy Ajello
Cheshire, Connecticut

City Math

While studying geometry, my students create a city at the rear of my classroom. Some create natural features such as lakes, hills, and rivers. Others design roads and bridges and consider modes of transportation. Still others design municipal services, recreational areas, and housing.

At home, students create a 3-D building to place in the town. They must provide a written mathematical description of the building they designed using area, perimeter, volume, angles, and distances. The cross-curricular connections are numerous.

Karen Osola Green
Spring Creek, Nevada



Have a great idea? You can pass along your tips to *NEA Today's* more than 2.4 million readers in one of five ways:

- By mail: *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., NW, Washington, DC 20036
- By phone: 202/822-7201
- By fax: 202/822-7206
- By E-mail: Ideas@neatoday.nea.org
- Through the Web: www.nea.org/neatoday

McCulloch Middle School.

Yet another joint committee, involving top administrators and MTA leaders, is planning the district's response to a new Indiana law requiring every school building to draw up an improvement plan with a professional development component.

"We don't want to set buildings up to compete with one another," says Creviston. "We want to allow each school to write a plan that serves its children and area population."

"Whatever we and administrators do, we do together—and keep student achievement foremost."

—Judy Creviston, president,
Marion Teachers
Association

Making this planning process far easier will be an innovative new teacher "review" or evaluation procedure drawn up by, yes, a joint committee after two years of laborious research. The new system, piloted among veteran educators last year and new teachers this year, replaces the old principal-with-a-checklist evaluation with an open-ended process based on peer support.

In a nutshell, this process permits each teacher—with the exception of those vets who prefer the old checklist—to select a support team for the year consisting of two or three colleagues and the building principal. The teacher meets with this team a couple of times a year and is free to request support tailored to his or her needs, from mentoring to classroom observation.

The review process, when fully developed, will involve stiffer training requirements and larger support teams for new teachers and vets who need extra help. But the basic philosophy of the system will be "people helping people," stresses Creviston.

"It's a professional development approach that puts each teacher in control of his or her destiny, based on the idea that good teachers can do an even better job and grow with support."

That kind of backing, coupled with the relaxed atmosphere that grows out of the interest-based process, can only benefit students in the end.

"Whatever we and administrators do, we do together," Creviston concludes. "And in whatever we do together, we keep student achievement foremost on the agenda." ✓

—Dave Winans

For more information, contact
Judy Creviston or Sharon Casey at
765/664-1244 or by E-mail at
marionta@comteck.com.

[DILEMMA]

What do you do with colleagues who constantly put down good ideas?

In my earlier days, I probably would have dismissed them as "old fossils" or spent energy trying to debate the issue. Now, after 23 years in the profession and finding I could be called the "old fossil," I view these negative opinions quite differently. I have begun to realize the value of listening to criticisms as a troubleshooting opportunity.

We are eager to do what's best for children and may overlook negative points that should be addressed. I try to look at an idea thinking about both the worst- and best-case scenarios.

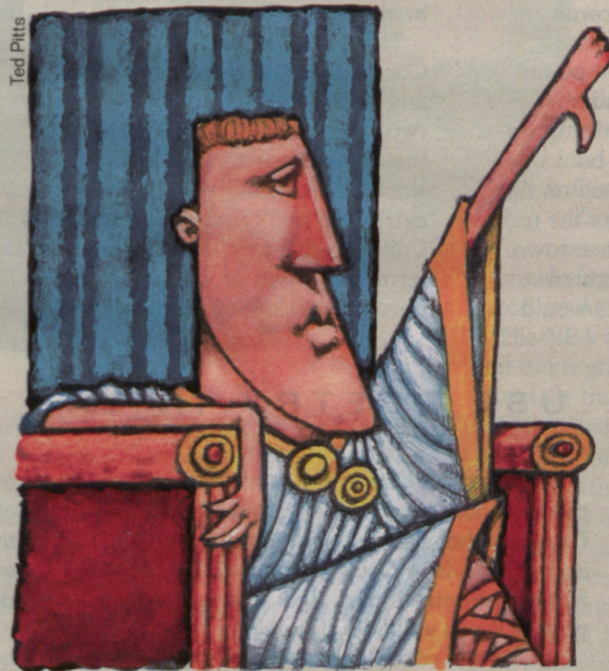
In addition, if that "negative" colleague begins to see that his or her ideas are given consideration, he or she may become more open.

If the colleague is voicing negative opinions honestly, then at least you will always be sure of where that person stands in any policy discussion. You won't be surprised by an unexpected challenge.

Kathleen Keefe
Fourth grade teacher
Casper, Wyoming

■ When I have colleagues who put down ideas that I think are good, I try to avoid bringing up new ideas around them. I seek out people who will help me brainstorm new ideas.

June Hunter
First grade teacher
Washington, Iowa



■ First, I play devil's advocate, acknowledging right up front the potential difficulties we would have to overcome to make it work.

Second, I garner support from other colleagues before presenting ideas to the group.

Third, when possible, I bring an article or book that supports the idea. Somehow, having an idea in writing and having several voices supporting it quiets the naysayers.

Janet Shlegle
Early childhood special education teacher
Loveville, Maryland

■ If I hear colleagues put down ideas, I generally listen and ask them questions in order to understand their point of view, especially if they have several years of teaching experience.

So often, those in charge jump on the bandwagon of every new fad program that comes around, and their desire to collect showy programs may prevent them from identifying potential problems. After all, they will not be on the front lines implementing these programs.

If we ignore or silence all except the "yes" folks, we do our children a major disservice.

Karyl Beal
Fifth grade teacher
Pavo, Georgia

■ If I ask them specifically what they do not like about the idea, many times they can not pin it down. If they talk about something specific, then there is room for discussion or changes that can win the approval of more teachers.

I may ask the teacher to give another suggestion, other than what is already being done.

Heather Falk
Special education teacher
Cloverdale, Oregon

■ We go ahead and do the "good ideas" anyway. Life is too short and our job too important to listen to negative people.

Ann Albert
Gifted & talented/reading teacher
Gowrie, Iowa

Got an Answer?

How do you rein in a class that's spun out of control?

E-mail your answer to dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org. Or send by mail, or fax to 202/822-7206. Please include your name, city, state, job title, and grade level if applicable.

NEA members published in this column will receive an NEA Today mug.

Real Teachers. . . can always be identified at welcome centers because they are the ones taking or asking for thirty of everything.

— John Hutchens, educational technologies specialist, Aiken, South Carolina

Reading for the Record

Imagine a community so focused on reading that it might just break a Guinness World Record.



NEA members Kim Ezekiel (left) and Donna Brogden with potential record holders.

More than 5,000 of Tifton, Georgia's 37,000 residents gathered at the town stadium last November, but not for a football game or other sporting event. Students, teachers, business owners, and community leaders met to celebrate a remarkable accomplishment. Proclaiming itself the "Reading Capital of the World," the small town organized the largest silent group read and group read-aloud, a feat they hope will land them in the *Guinness Book of World Records*.

Over three years, the community earned more than one million points through the Accelerated Reader Program, a computerized learning system that tests people on the books they read, then assigns points based on the difficulty of each book. That's the most points ever accumulated in one town.

"We started having Accelerated Reader nights, where parents would

come to school with their children, read books, and then take the tests associated with their books," says Donna Brogden, a second grade teacher at Len Lastinger Primary School. The public library even installed the software on its computers.

And it didn't take long to generate reading excitement throughout the community once school and civic leaders, along with the Tift County Foundation for Educational Excellence, set a million-point goal.

Business owners gave employees extra pay for books read, and schools began attracting grandparents, parents, and others who wanted to "earn points" for the town. Many businesses even closed the day of the celebration so employees could attend.

Despite the festivities, NEA member Kim Ezekiel, principal at Len Lastinger, admits that keeping kids focused on reading hasn't always been easy.

"Reading has always been a priority, but we haven't always been successful," she says. "Our school serves a large population of minority and high-poverty children. Some don't always get reading encouragement from home."

That's why, as part of the Tift County Schools initiative, Ezekiel and her staff also implemented two other reading programs at the 620-student school: Reading Recovery for children who need extra help and Literacy Collaborative to give staff long-term, site-based professional development opportunities.

Ezekiel and Brogden agree that they've finally found a winning combination of reading strategies for their school.

"The majority of children are now reading because they want to read, not because they have to," says Brogden.

Still waiting for confirmation of their achievement from Guinness, Brogden says the children have already learned a very powerful lesson from the community about the joy of reading.

"The November celebration is something we'll talk about for a long time to come," she says, "but the real joy lies in knowing that the long-term emphasis on reading is working." ✓

—Dina S. Gómez

Be a Copy Cat

Here are great "copy-Cat" ideas for NEA's Read Across America day, March 2, and beyond: Students at Mattawoman Middle School in Waldorf, Maryland, critique their favorite books during morning announcements—a great way to practice public speaking and encourage



peers to read. At Norris Elementary in Bakersfield, California, grandparents, parents, and kids show how the love of reading is part of a family legacy in

a "Generations of Readers" read-aloud. Share your plans and pledge to participate at www.nea.org/readacross/pledge.html

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HOW TO...USE POETRY IN THE CLASSROOM



Bob Riha, Jr.

"Poetry has a place in the curriculum, from pre-K to college prep," says poet Nikki Grimes, whose award-winning children's books include *A Dime a Dozen* (Dial). April is National Poetry Month and a perfect time to pocket these valuable tips:

- Choose poetry that you enjoy and are passionate about. Good or bad, your attitude in the classroom is infectious.
- Set out to have fun. Remember, if you present poetry as though it were castor oil, you can be sure no one will like it.
- Focus initially on experiencing poetry rather than dissecting it. Read your favorites, and share poems you've created. If you risk reading your own works, it will encourage your students to risk reading their own.
- Give up the notion of "good or bad," "right

or wrong" poetry. If you want students to attempt to write poetry, encourage them when they do. Rather than saying, "that's wrong," say, "that's a good start. Here's what you can do to make it better."

■ Poetry reading can be a tremendous bonding experience. Set aside time regularly to allow students to read their work aloud in class. Videotape if possible, and make a big deal about it so they'll realize how important their work is and how much you value and respect their self-expression. You'll be amazed what you learn about your students and what they'll learn about each other.

For more: E-mail NikkiGrimes@yahoo.com, read *Pass the Poetry, Please* by Lee Bennett Hopkins (Harper), or visit www.poets.org.

Rural Education Gets Squeezed

Big problems are cropping up for small schools in the country.

Seven teachers, 34 kids. Sound too good to be true? It was. Those numbers describe what was the Butte Public School, in Butte, North Dakota, which closed last year, along with many other schools in rural areas of the country. West Virginia alone has closed a fifth of its schools in the last decade. They're all victims of a relentless school consolidation effort, leaving children with fond memories to think about on their new, much longer bus rides to bigger schools.

And consolidation is just one of the severe problems facing schools in rural areas.

How many students are there in rural areas and small towns?

About 11.4 million children go to school in communities defined by the Census Bureau as rural or small towns.

That's about a quarter of the 46.4 million school children in America. They are divided roughly equally between what the Census Bureau calls rural communities (under 2,500) and small towns (2,500 to 25,000).

What are the benefits of small, rural schools?

"There's a strong sense of community," says Pam Brown, a technology teacher who chairs the NEA's Rural Caucus.

"Often, the community is staying alive because of the school. And there's more individual attention for children."

Marty Strange of the Rural School and Community Trust, a group that's fighting consolidation, recalls one little girl at a school that was closing. She said, "I'll miss being the only Emily."

What are the advantages of bigger, consolidated schools?

Bigger schools can offer a greater variety of programs, both academic and extra-curricular.

It's easier to organize classes so teachers only teach in their specialties.

Faculty and students are both likely to be more diverse.

"My son was in a class of seven last year," says Brown. "There were two other boys. He didn't have much choice about who his peer group would be."

Bigger schools also offer students a chance to work with more teachers. "Maybe one English teacher is really good at journalism, but the other one is stronger in literature, which is what you discover you like," says Brown.

And let's not forget something of

crucial importance to political decision makers: Consolidated schools are often cheaper to run, largely because the classes are bigger.

How about the bus rides?

Transportation is an enormous problem in many districts with consolidated schools. Some students, even small children, spend more than 90 minutes traveling each way.

"My own kids," says Brown, "get on the bus in the dark before 7 a.m., and when they have sports practice they come home in the dark at 7 p.m."

even worse there than elsewhere.

But don't expect to get rich. Rural areas generally pay less.

In the NEA's annual state-by-state salary surveys, Mississippi, North Dakota, and South Dakota seem to compete for last place. All three pay less than three-quarters of the national average.

As a result, some North Dakota schools couldn't fill teaching positions. "Their kids are trying to learn core subjects over interactive television with a screen in front of the room instead of a teacher," Brown reports.

What can be done?

Brown says high-speed connectivity can help provide access to the outside world. Mentoring programs can help rural schools hold on to their young teachers. And free tuition for advanced degree studies can encourage experienced teachers to stay.

Brown argues that states need to take a hard look at their priorities. "In North Dakota," she notes, "we have really beautiful rest areas on our highways. But we're 50th in teacher salaries."

But she adds, "These states can't do it alone. There has to be funding at a national level."

Many rural areas simply don't have the resources.

Outside America's metropolitan areas, one in seven people lives below the poverty line.

That's not quite as high as in central cities (one in six), but it's much higher than in the rest of metropolitan America (one in 12).

The NEA is pushing to double the federal funds going to small rural schools, especially those in low income areas.

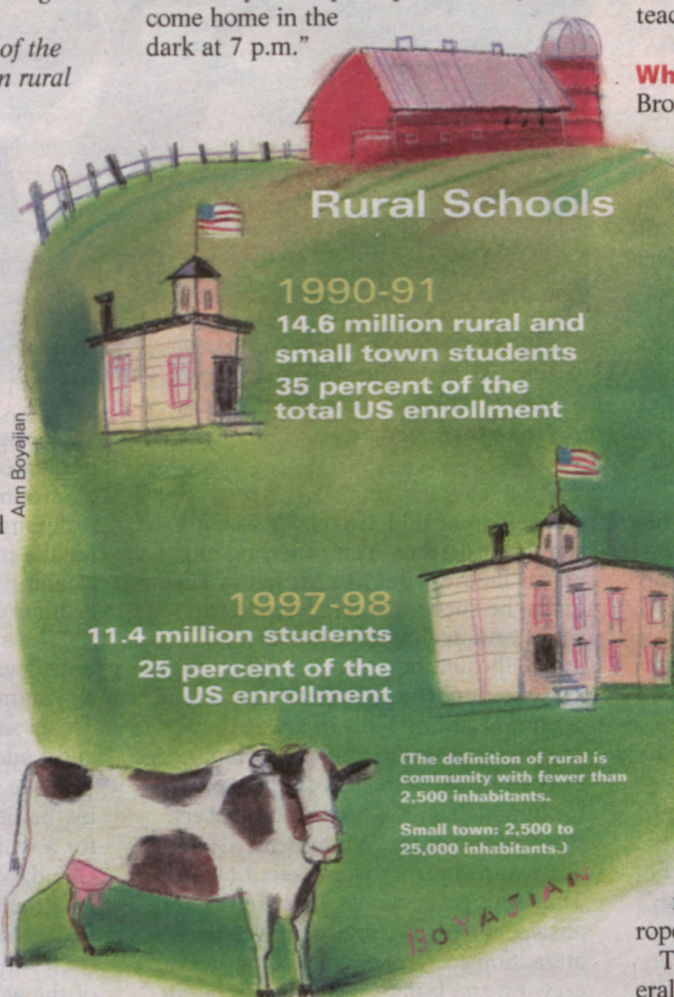
"I'm a product of a rural school," says Amy Simmons, an NEA student leader at Minot State University in North Dakota who grew up in Glenburn, population 450.

"I got plenty of attention from my teachers, and I had opportunities to get involved in 15 things at once—basketball, volleyball, choir, band, class officer, homecoming queen, everything.

"When I have children," she says, "this is what I want for them."

—Alain Jehlen

For more: Visit the Rural School and Community Trust at www.ruraledu.org, the Appalachia Educational Laboratory at www.ael.org/rel/rural/index.htm, and Organizations Concerned with Rural Education (OCRE) at www.rural.schools.org/. And go to www.nea.org and search for "rural."



Can we have the benefits of small schools without the drawbacks?

Not easily, because the benefits and drawbacks both flow from smallness.

But sometimes technology can help. For example, South Dakota Education Association President Elaine Roberts points to Mary Cundy of Miller, South Dakota, an experienced calculus teacher, who is leading a class in another school by video, along with her own students.

The regular math teacher for the other class takes part as well. Next year, he'll have the experience to teach this subject on his own, without having had to jump in and sink or swim.

I like peace and quiet. Can I find a teaching job in rural America?

There are plenty of jobs for teachers in rural areas. The teacher shortage is

TEAMWORK

Special Needs Kids Run Program with Star Power

Minnesota paraeducator helps special ed students run local movie theater.

Danya Troxel's classroom isn't what you'd consider "standard." It's got 18 screens, produces barrels of popcorn, and you need a ticket to get in—unless you're one of Troxel's students.

If you rate that honor, then you get free tickets anytime to her classroom, also known as the White Bear Township Theater, just north of St. Paul, Minnesota, in the suburban Twin Cities.

"To the kids, the tickets rate as one of the huge selling points for our program," says Troxel, a paraeducator and vice president of her local union.

Troxel started this unique program for special needs students at White Bear High School five years ago. Its success rate is enviable: Of 79 kids enrolled over those years, 78 have graduated.

That level of success has been attained with students ages 16 to 21 who have autism, Down's syndrome, emotional and behavioral disorders, mental retardation, or live with multiple handicaps.

The key to excelling, Troxel says, is "holding students accountable for their tasks. They must learn to stay on

task."

Important qualities for special needs instructors include compassion and firmness. "You can't be too soft," she says. "Either they'll run you over, or you'll fail to realize everything they can achieve."

No student wants to risk "The Wrath of Danya," which is a good-natured reminder that they have work to do and better get it done.

These kids also quickly learn responsibility from the theater's general manager, Shari Wilson. "Shari holds these kids to the same level of accountability and performance that she does her other employees. That's exactly what they need," says Troxel. "Other people assume my kids can't do it. But Shari understood right away, and these kids rise to the level we expect."



Paraeducator Danya Troxel (right) and theater manager Sheri Wilson run through ticketing process.

One parent told Troxel, "My child can never do that. You're setting him up for failure." But like his fellow students, he succeeded. He learned to smile, and deal with customers.

The theater, notes Troxel, offers these kids the opportunity to learn social and communications skills in a way they couldn't in a traditional classroom.

Typically, kids in such programs work for one hour in a Goodwill or grocery store. Many of the White Bear Township students work a six-hour day. They set up the concessions, sell tickets, answer the phone, and clean the theaters. Some even helped a construction crew on-site last spring during a building addition project.

Some of Troxel's students end up taking full-time jobs at the theater.

One severely autistic young man who graduated last year made such strong all-around progress through Troxel's program that he even got dressed up for the prom. He now has a full-time cleaning job at a Twin Cities pharmaceutical company.

"The strides this person made are unbelievable. It's even remarkable that he can make eye contact with others," Troxel says. "He's just the cutest kid, and I adore him."

While in college, Troxel was tempted by the field of law. But then she worked for a while at Camp Friendship near St. Cloud, Minnesota. The special needs kids there touched her deeply, and she made this field her life's work.

"It's incredibly rewarding," she says, of the work she's done for 15 years. "To see these kids grow up and mature and achieve the things they do, it's just awesome. I'm so proud of them." ✓

Going the Extra Mile

The Anacortes Educational Secretaries Association has used a community relations grant from the Washington Education Association to set up its own "Caring for Kids" program. The goal of the program, patterned after a similar one run by the Educational Support Personnel of Clover Park, is to provide back-to-school assistance to children.

At Anacortes's first fair last

August, the local provided children with school supplies, clothing, hygiene items, and even haircuts to help them get ready for school.

Local leader Cathy Pitts first heard about the "Caring for Kids" program in the *WEA Action*, the NEA state affiliate newspaper.

After reading the article, Pitts thought, "What a great idea. We should do this in Anacortes."

Photos by Larry Salzman



Custodian Phil Krueger has inspired a staff fund to help needy students.

TEAM PLAYER

A Giving Spirit

Name: Phil Krueger

Job Title: Custodian at Park Lawn Elementary School in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin

What I do: I spend a lot of time in the cafeteria. It's there that I noticed some children weren't receiving hot lunches. I've been in the community long enough to know that these students' parents, even though both may work, were struggling financially and couldn't afford the added expense. So my wife and I decided to anonymously "adopt" a family with three children. We made sure their lunches were paid for each day the rest of the school year.

Then at a staff meeting, I asked everyone what other problems we might work together to solve and urged them to think of ways to help these working families. The response was so overwhelming from people who wanted to give money and help that we started a school charitable fund that staff named "Phil's Fund."

Impact: While it started with the lunch program, Phil's Fund is now allowing us to help families in a variety

of ways, and it's all done confidentially.

In the last two years, we've donated more than \$3,600 to families at our school. We've used the money to send gift certificates for the local grocery store to families with anonymous notes, buy and distribute new winter clothing to children who need it, and help pay for children's medical bills. We've also developed a network of dentists, doctors, and businesses that volunteer their time and resources, which has helped us adopt 25 families at Christmas and provide them with gifts and food.

There is an enormous commitment among our staff to help families who might have hit a bad patch. We see them as our family, so we use the fund to give them a leg up, not a handout. We even gave a computer to a father who lost his job due to a terrible accident. He was going to school to get retrained, but he didn't have any access to a computer at home, so we made sure that he did.

Throughout this entire process, we also discovered that some families who were struggling to provide hot lunches for their children didn't fill out their federal free and reduced lunch papers because they found them too compli-



cated, like a tax form. So we now offer individual assistance to help them complete the necessary paperwork.

Special concerns: Helping these children succeed in school so they can succeed in life. Phil's Fund is run by a committee of three people, including me, and we do everything possible to keep the names of the people we're helping confidential so students don't get embarrassed that they might be receiving help from us. At the same time, we want to be there for anyone in need.

I'm still overwhelmed by the incredible giving spirit that has taken over my school. ✓

RESOURCES

Safe Schools

"The vast majority of America's schools continue to be safe places." That significant quote, which bears repeating, serves as lead sentence to the 2000 edition of the *Annual Report on School Safety*. The joint report from the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice delves deeply into all facets of crime and violence in our schools. It notes that schools are becoming even safer, notwithstanding reports of school violence.

That doesn't mean the fears of students, school employees, and parents—real fears—should be discounted. The report examines the nature and scope of school violence; outlines collaborative, problem-solving

models that 23 communities have put into service; looks at student discipline information; and adds a list of resources. You can read the full study at www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS/annrept00.pdf.

Working as a Team

Teachers and paraeducators have been working together for years, but very few teachers have been adequately trained to work with another adult in the classroom.

A Teacher's Guide to Working with Paraeducators and Other Classroom Aides, by Jill Morgan and Betty Y. Ashbaker, addresses this issue with concrete suggestions for improving the daily working relationship between

teachers and paras. \$18.95 from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Call 800/933-ASCD to order or visit www.ascd.org to read an excerpt.

What Am I Eating?

Who isn't concerned about food safety these days? First it was good or bad cholesterol. Then we heard about all those pesticides in fruits and vegetables. What's an educator to do?

One place to start is www.foodsafety.gov. In addition to plenty of factual information, this site includes interesting things for kids such as a word match and coloring book, news and safety alerts, and a search engine. And check out the links to other sites.

Pitts and parent volunteer Christi Durfee got started by contacting every charitable group in town, receiving promises of support, including the \$1,500 WEA grant.

By August, they'd collected \$4,000 in cash and the help of 50 volunteers, more than enough resources to make the local's first "Caring for Kids" fair a rousing success. Planning for the next fair is already underway.

The Baldwinsville (New York) Educational Support Personnel Association is using a \$3,230 NEA ESP Information System (ESPIS) Technology grant to better communicate with its members.

The grant bought a laptop computer, fax machine, scanner, color printer, and Internet access.

Lynn Romanick, a paraeducator, first learned of the grant at a national ESP conference.

Romanick shared her expertise with local members Karen Palmer, a secretary for elementary education and an NEA/NY Region 7 delegate, and Sharon Vining, a junior high school secretary and the local's treasurer.

Well armed, Palmer and Vining set about writing the grant application. "They did all the legwork. I input the information," says Romanick. And the rest is history.



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^ΔJ.D. Power and Associates 1999 Comprehensive Credit Cardholder Satisfaction Study.[™] Study conducted among 10,420 revolving credit cardholders. A complete list of credit cards ranked can be found at www.jdpower.com

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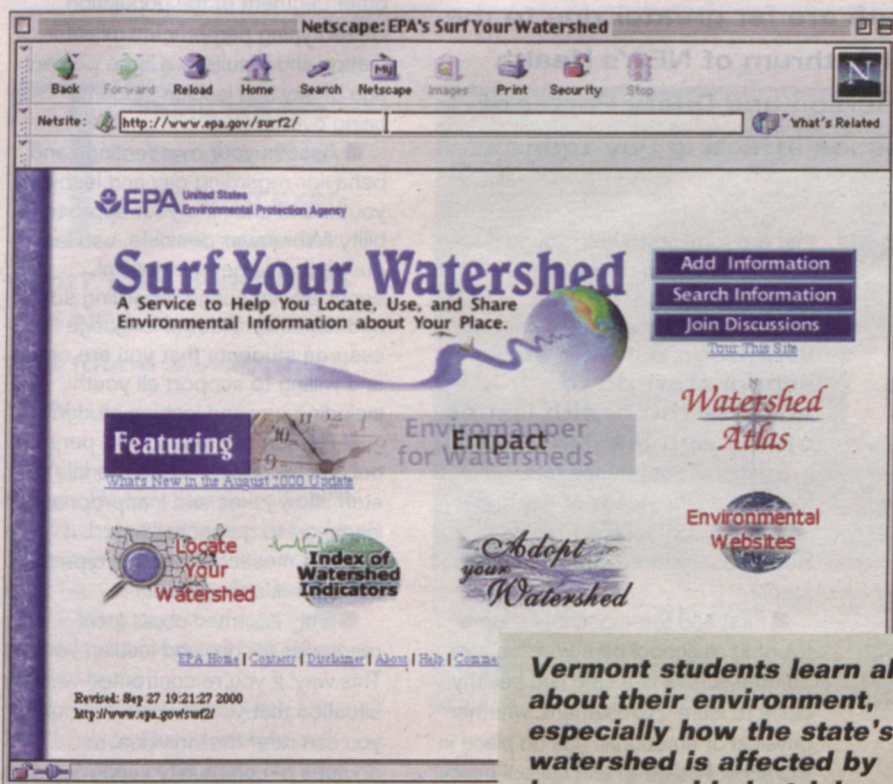
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Vermont students learn all about their environment, especially how the state's watershed is affected by humans and industrial development.

Research on Water

The EPA Web site Surf Your Watershed (www.epa.gov/surf2) focuses on environmental studies. Students in my class are required to conduct different types of research on watershed issues.

Using this site, they located the watershed in which we live and found out the conditions and potential stresses to it. Then they were given a second watershed in our state to research. Finally, they wrote a research report that compared the two watersheds in terms of conditions, stresses, land uses, and identified Superfund sites.

In addition, they printed out graphs of the conditions and vulnerabilities of each watershed and, using topographical maps, outlined and highlighted the different land uses and ecosystems contained within the watersheds they researched.

TALK TO US

Have a nifty classroom tip or lesson plan that uses technology? E-mail a description (under 200 words, please!) to wiredclassroom@list.nea.org.

Is there a Web site, CD-ROM, or piece of software you can't live without? E-mail your favorites—and why you love them—to myfavoritetech@list.nea.org.

Or send your responses by regular mail to NEA Today, or by Fax to 202/822-7206, or through the Web at www.nea.org/cet.

Those published here will receive a sparkling NEA Today mug!

Students will use this as background information when studying our Batten Kill River, to help them determine the monitoring that needs to be done on a regular basis due to potential stresses to the river.

Laurie Lawrence
Burr and Burton Academy
Manchester, Vermont

By the Buttes

I recently created a "virtual field trip" (at cbutte.freelyellow.com) to help students learn about the interesting geology of Crown Butte, a plutonic formation located in central Montana.

Crown Butte has many interesting features, including columnar jointing, layers of igneous rock, crystals, and an association with an ancient volcano.

The field trip experience provides a real-world context that will make concepts more interesting to students as they learn about volcanic activity. Montana students who are familiar with the many flat-topped buttes scattered throughout the central part of our state may find it especially interesting.

The "virtual field trip" Web site (cbutte.freelyellow.com) includes a student worksheet that can be used either as an assignment or as extra credit.

The activity worked so well that I hope to develop more "trips" to use with my ninth grade earth science students in the future.

Rod Benson
Helena High School
Helena, Montana

Everything for the Arts

I use ideas from www.janbrett.com quite often. Jan Brett is an illustrator-artist from Massachusetts. Each year, she visits schools in different parts of the country.

The Web site has everything from literature links to project ideas, plus a range of Jan's artwork to print out and use in the classroom (including alphabet sets, number sets, and masks).

It's a wonderful springboard for so many projects in the primary classroom.

Jan also has a wonderful teacher pack that she'll send to teachers and librarians. Jan E-mails site updates and improvements all the time. She also replies very quickly to E-mail letters from teachers and students.

A wonderful site. Check it out!

Vickie Luchuck
Lumberport Elementary
Lumberport, West Virginia

My favorite Web site

My favorite site is the one my students and I have made for our school's nature trail—<http://mvstd.neiu.k12.pa.us/trail.htm>. Other schools can use the site as a guide for their own curriculums. With my students always updating the site, it's very much a work in progress.

Rosann Moskel
Throop, Pennsylvania

Bytes for Beginners

There's got to be an easier way to narrow down the Web search results. How can I improve my searching?

By definition, a search engine is a software program that searches the Net (Web and other Internet-based protocols such as mailing lists). Search engines use software programs called "spiders" or "crawlers" that continuously roam the Net, capture content addresses, and return that data to very large databases. Google is an example of this type of search engine and, therefore, is a good choice if you prefer to cast the widest search for content across the Net. Lycos also employs crawler software to collect links from the Net.

Do you prefer to start your search from an interface that offers you "categories" from which to begin your search? If so, you might want to try Yahoo. At Yahoo, you begin your search from a list of categories and subjects—it's more of a "directory."

The key to getting back the most relevant hits (list of URLs) is to understand how to enter search terms. Most engines accept commands that modify searches. Commands use the + (plus) and - (minus) signs to modify search terms to focus results.

The plus sign tells a search engine to find pages with all the words you enter, not just some of them (for example, if you want to find pages with references to both CATS and DOGS on the same page, you type: +CATS +DOGS).

The minus sign tells a search engine to find pages that have one word on them but not another word (for example, if you want information about CATS but not pages relating to DOGS, you type: CATS - DOGS).

Combining both symbols: PETS + CATS - DOGS tells the search engine to return pages relating to PETS that mention CATS but not DOGS.

When Kids Don't Have a Straight Answer

All adolescents struggle with issues surrounding sexuality and sex. But the pressures on gay and lesbian youth are far greater due to the isolation and confusion many suffer. Paul Sathrum of NEA's Health Information Network spoke to Karen Anderson and Dusty Porter of the American Psychological Association on health issues affecting gay teens.

Do gay teens face more significant health issues than other youth?

Like all youth, gay and lesbian adolescents are navigating what can be difficult and confusing years. But unlike other youth, many gay teens are trying to find their way without the necessary support systems. Consequently, studies have found a higher rate of risk-taking behavior among these students.

For example, a national study on adolescent health indicates that lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth reported higher levels of emotional distress, greater use of marijuana, and earlier sexual debut. Gay and lesbian youth are at higher risk for using alcohol and other drugs, becoming a teen parent, and of having made a suicide plan or attempt.

Most alarming is the significant rate of HIV infection among young men with same-sex partners. From July 1998 to June 1999, 50 percent of all HIV diagnoses among adolescent males aged 13–19 were attributed to this.

Why is it so critical to recognize the specific needs of gay students?

Many gay and lesbian teens face violence and harassment at school. A reported 69 percent have been verbally, physically, or sexually harassed at school, and as many as 28 percent of all gay youth in high school drop out to escape such treatment. School personnel need to recognize that hostile hallways are a health issue, as well as a legal one.

Gay teens often report a sense of isolation and lack of visibility, and the fact that relatively few messages are targeted to gay teens compounds their sense of isolation.

For example, what does the message of "abstinence until marriage" say to a gay teen? One possible conclusion they may come to is, "I don't have to wait because I won't be getting married." By not developing messages that are specific to gay teens, we potentially could be placing them at greater risk.

It is important to note, however, that many gay and lesbian teens have sophisticated coping and resiliency skills, according to recent studies. These students use a broader range

of coping resources than their heterosexual peers and may be more likely to develop greater interpersonal problem-solving skills.

Realistically, is it possible to identify students who are gay?

This is difficult because there is no single standard to determine gay and lesbian youth. Should a definition be based on attraction, behavior, or identification? Depending on which standard is being used, the individuals identified may be vastly different.

But we do know that gay and lesbian youth are coming out at earlier ages. Only a few years ago, the age of self-disclosure was between 18–22. Now gay youth are coming out as early as age 12. This trend may be due to increased media visibility and availability of resources such as the gay, lesbian, and straight student organizations

that are forming to help young people attempting to deal with their sexual orientation.

What can schools and school staff do to address the health issues of gay and lesbian youth?

In a national conference that focused on the needs of gay and lesbian students, NEA President Bob Chase offered some specific steps:

- First and foremost, it is imperative that all school personnel ensure that the school is a safe and healthy place to learn. Harassment, whether physical or emotional, has no place in the school building, and school policy should clearly dictate that such incidents against gay and lesbian youth should be dealt with as severely as those involving any other segment of the student population.

- Keep in mind that gay, lesbian,

bisexual, transgendered, and questioning youth are as diverse as any other segment of the population. Stereotyping perpetuates misinformation and results in a large percentage of gay and lesbian students being overlooked.

- Assess your own feelings and behavior regarding gay and lesbian youth, and examine your approachability. Whenever possible, use language that is gender neutral, especially language regarding sex and sexuality. Neutral language assures students that you are open and willing to support all youth, including gay and lesbian students.

- Remember that school personnel can be powerful role models. If staff allow jokes and inappropriate language to go unchallenged, it sends a message that this type of behavior is acceptable.

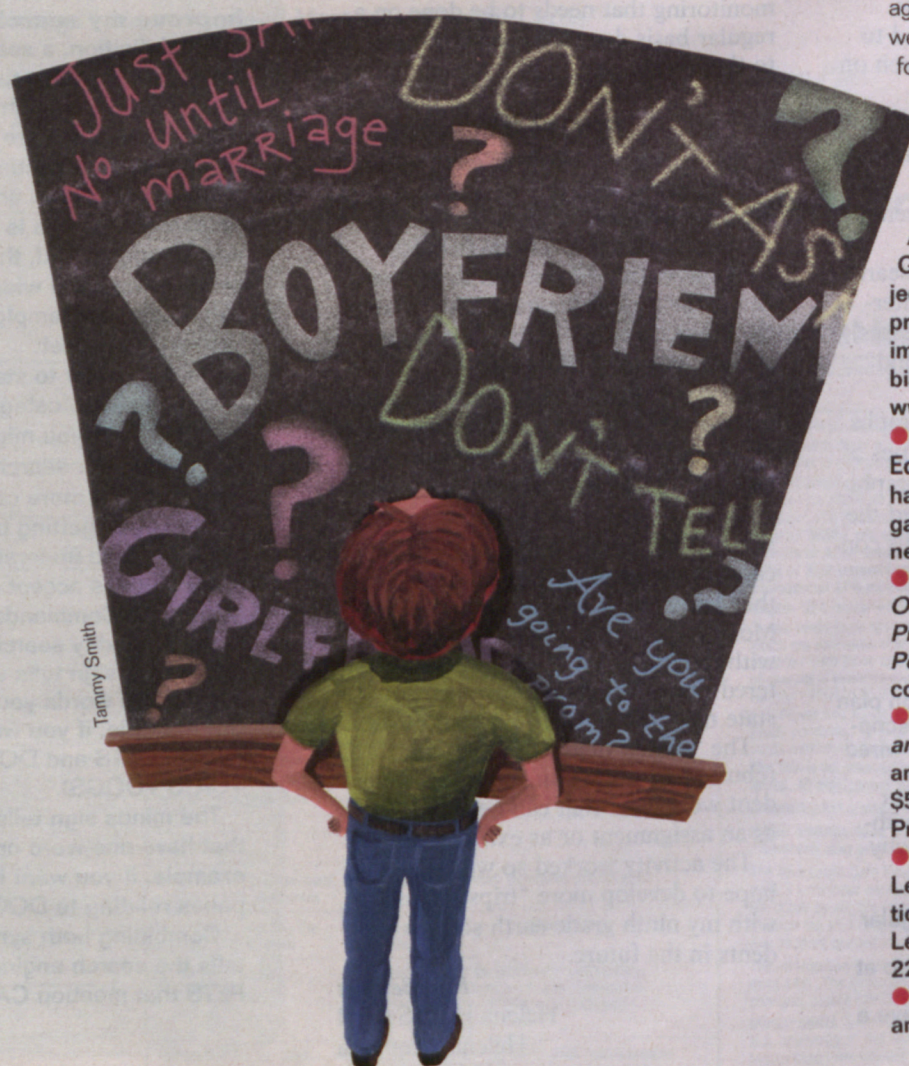
- Stay informed about local resources for gay and lesbian youth. This way, if you're confronted with a situation that you're unsure about, you can refer the individual to sources of community support.

- Finally, assess all school services to see whether they are inclusive or exclusive, and if they are addressing the needs and concerns of gay and lesbian youth.

Remember, as with other sensitive social issues, we may never fully agree on issues around sexuality. But we must create a safe environment for all students. ✓

RESOURCES:

- The American Psychological Association's Healthy Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Students Project works with schools to help prevent risky behaviors and improve health outcomes for lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth. www.apa.org/ed/lgbproj.html.
- The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Educators Network combats harassment and discrimination of gay students and school personnel. www.glsen.org.
- *Just the Facts about Sexual Orientation and Youth: A Primer for Principals, Educators, and School Personnel*. For a free copy, E-mail ccalhoun@nea.org.
- *Lesbian and Gay Youth: Care and Counseling* by Caitlan Ryan and Donna Futterman, 256 pp., \$50 from Columbia University Press, 800/944-8648.
- The NEA's "Strengthening the Learning Environment: An Education Employee's Guide to Gay and Lesbian Issues." To order: 1/800-229-4200; www.nea.org/books.
- Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, www.pflag.org.



Tammy Smith

Squeezing Fitness into Your Busy Day

Think it's too hard to find time to exercise and eat right? Take heart from one NEA member who has found a will, and a way.

"Who has time to exercise?" thought Barbara Pollak, an English-as-second-language teacher in New Jersey. She was too busy doing what busy educators do: teaching all day, grading papers at night, and caring for her own children when she got home.

But with a little creativity, and help from an at-work weight program, Pollak—who splits her time between Clark Mills and Pinebrook schools in the Manalapan-Englishtown regional district—has found great ways to "sneak" exercise and nutrition into her hectic schedule.

"I used to eat two hamburgers in one sitting," she recalls. "And exercise was for other people, not me."

But when she learned she was at-risk for heart disease, Pollak made the decision then and there to live healthier.

"I started reading whatever nutrition and exercise materials I could get my hands on and did a lot of research on the Internet," says Pollak, who has since dropped two dress sizes and lowered her blood pressure and cholesterol. She learned about appropriate portion sizes, moderation, the importance of drinking water, and just how fun exercise could be.

"I use my prep period to do crunches in the corner, and I try to



Dan Loflin

Finding out she was at-risk for heart disease gave Barbara Pollak the jump-start she needed to make time for fitness and weight loss.

take a brisk 20-minute walk around the school neighborhood at lunch," she says. "If the weather is bad, I walk in the halls around the school. I've actually been known to join in the children's gym classes, especially if they are jumping rope."

Pollak also squeezes in fitness at night and on weekends—enough to meet her goal of at least 30 minutes of exercise three to five days per week. She takes a folk dancing class, walks four miles with her friends every Saturday, swims, and lifts hand weights while watching TV. She also bikes the four miles to her weekly meeting in good weather.

"I'm not an exercise freak, and I'm not one of those people who can live on salads," she says. "Even though it's taken me the better part of two years, I've learned you can be more fit at size 14 than models who are size 2. I'm proud that eating healthy and exercise now have a place in my daily routine."

As proof, Pollak found herself longing for crunches after a six-week recovery following surgery.

"I couldn't wait to exercise," says Pollak, "because I wanted that overall healthy feeling I get knowing I've done something good for me."

Easy Steps

1. Do sit-ups during your prep period or break. If you don't have a carpeted area, bring a yoga mat.
2. Use soup cans for weights. They're just as good as dumbbells.
3. Tape exercise shows on TV to provide new routines and moves.
4. Don't keep your exercise machines in the basement—you'll make excuses not to use them.
5. Bring healthy snacks to school and take the time to eat them.
6. Sign up for E-mail tips on Web sites such as E-diets, Prevention Magazine Online, and Weight Watchers. ✓

—Dina S. Gómez

Quick Tip

Cindy Brune

On eating differently, exercising more, and reducing stress:

- Clear the kitchen and cook! Invite a friend over who can really teach you the great art of a delicious meal.
- Walk, and breathe, and dream. Write down your worries and stick them in a box. They will be there when you come back from your walk.
- Refuse to coach yourself out of a good night's rest, a well-deserved trip to the massage center, or a heart-to-heart talk with a good therapist or close friend. All three will do more for you than whining over why the weight isn't coming off like you think it should.

Cindy Brune, guidance counselor at Iowa's Wilton Elementary, conducts motivational talks on fitness and stress reduction. cbrune@mail.wilton.k12.ia.us



NEA-HIN

From the
**NEA Health
Information
Network**

■ Safe Schools Now

Tune in to two new Safe Schools Now broadcasts:

"Building Skills to Manage Student Anger" (March 22) explores a range of school-based programs that help school employees help students deal with anger against themselves or their schoolmates.

"Media Violence: Teaching Students Critical Viewing Skills" (May 24) teaches students to analyze the media's impact on their own thinking and actions.

Co-produced with Court TV Cable in the Classroom. For broadcast information, visit www.safeschools.now.org

■ Youth Anti-Drug Campaign

The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign has relaunched the Youth Anti-Drug.com Web site, which provides information on substance abuse and drug prevention to parents and other adult caregivers. www.theantidrug.com

■ Quitting Smoking

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has published "You Can Quit Smoking," a booklet with resources to help folks quit smoking. For free booklets in English or Spanish, call the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 800/358-9295; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 800/CDC-1311; or the National Cancer Institute, 800/4-CANCER. Posters in English and Spanish are also available.

■ Classroom Calls

The Classroom Calls Program is a free informational service about HIV and STDs and how to prevent them. Students and teachers use a speaker phone to ask questions and receive immediate responses. Call the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National STD and AIDS Hotline at 800/342-2437 or 800/227-8922.

Maryland Teacher Is NFL's First Pick

One teacher's commitment to student athletes pays off with a new title: NFL Teacher of the Year.

When Springbrook High School teacher **Joyce Amatucci**

received a Christmas present in the mail from former student Shawn Springs (inset photo), now a corner-back with the Seattle Seahawks, she wasn't surprised.

"He's been telling me for years that he would send me a Seahawks team jersey," says the Silver Springs, Maryland, Spanish teacher.

But when she looked inside, she didn't find a jersey. Instead, she found a letter from the National Football League, congratulating her on being chosen as the 2000 NFL Teacher of the Year, a program that honors teachers who've had a positive influence on NFL players.

Along with the letter was a handwritten note from Springs, who graduated from Springbrook in 1993. It read: "This is what you get for all the yelling you did."

"I've been known to yell, as well as throw tantrums," Amatucci agrees with a laugh.

As the unofficial "mom" to every athlete at the 2,000-plus-student school, Amatucci keeps an open classroom door every day during prep period and for two hours after school for free tutoring sessions, in any subject.

She also voluntarily keeps tabs on student athletes' weekly grade sheets through a program she created called "Athletics Support Program."

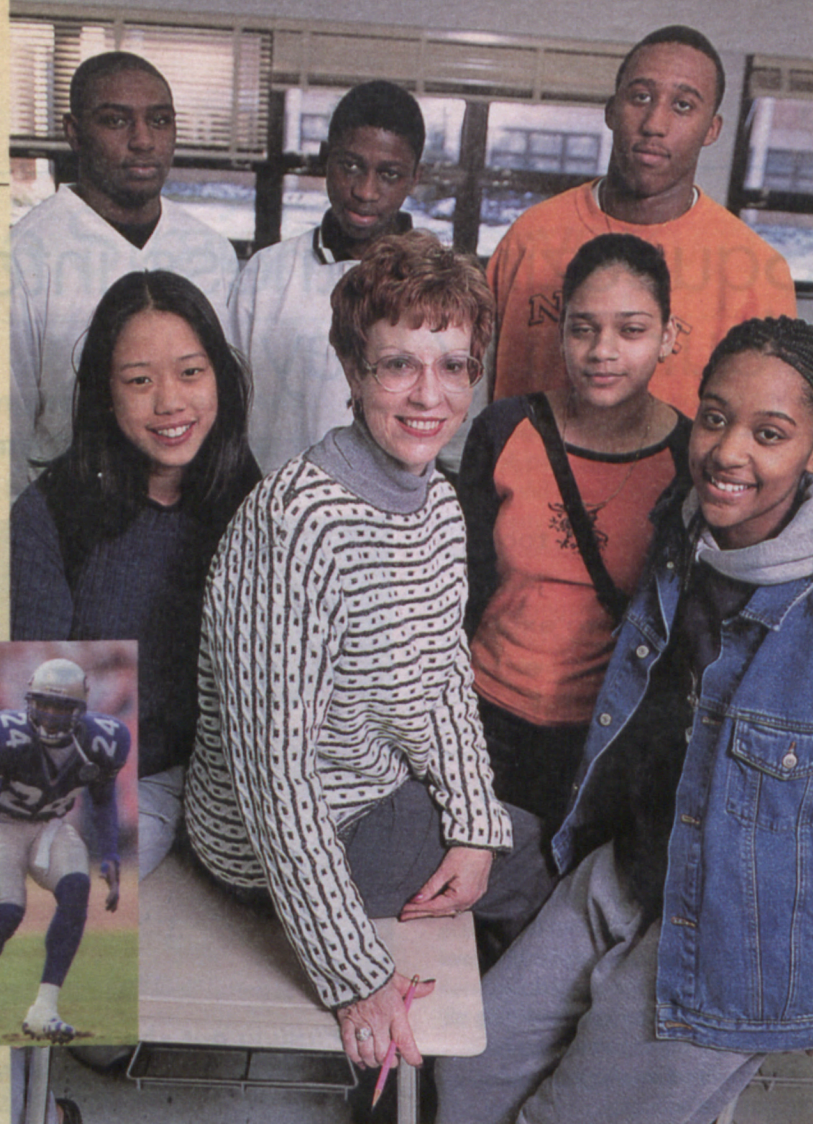
"The other teachers will E-mail or call me and say, 'You have to help me with so-and-so. He didn't write his paper,' or 'He got an F on his test,'" says the 30-year teaching veteran. "So I'll have a heart-to-heart after school with that athlete, or I might just go over to practice and tell the coach, 'Sorry, so-and-so can't practice today. He didn't do his paper.' And the coach sends him to me."

Amatucci is also involved with the NCAA Clearinghouse and Alternative Education Program for Marginal Students. She also attends every game, every sport.

Amatucci says her commitment to athletes comes easily, especially



Seattle Seahawks



Paul Taffedo

because the entire school staff supports her role. Ironically, her "meddling" also makes her a beloved teacher. In his nomination form, Springs called her "the glue that keeps the whole school together."

"She makes her students feel secure, safe, and cared for," says Springs, now in his fourth year with the NFL, "whether it's having them over for dinner at her house and helping them successfully complete a paper, or giving them a ride home when they stay after school to work

on homework assignments.

"She is respected and admired by every student at Springbrook," adds Springs.

"I'm just overwhelmed," says Amatucci, who was honored with a \$5,000 personal grant and a \$10,000 check for Springbrook at the NFL All-Star game in Hawaii last month. "Working with the athletes has made my job more fun, especially because I am the antithesis of athletics myself. I get all I need through these kids." ✓

Stories by Dina S. Gómez

They've Got (Lots of) Mail



Krystle Lamprecht

Last March, **John Street** and his fourth grade students at Newcastle Public School in rural Newcastle, Nebraska, (population: 270) hit upon a great idea: Use the power of E-mail to teach geography.

"I thought it would be clever to send an E-mail from the class asking recipients to respond with their locations and forward our E-mail on to as many people as they could," says Street. Students would then plot the respondents' location on a map.

"I was hoping 500 people would respond," he adds. "Looking back, I can't believe how naive I was!"

Within hours of sending the E-mail to only 20 people in Street's Yahoo address book, students were receiving messages back from China, South America, and several

Southern states.

Now, one year later, Street estimates they've received more than 150,000 responses to that first message. In one 24-hour period, the class box received more than 9,000 messages—375 E-mails per hour.

"We get lengthy letters and lots of photographs from all over the world," he says. "People send wedding pictures, baptism pictures, baby pictures, dog pictures. We got photos of a zebra and other animals from a missionary in South Africa, and a man from Antarctica sent us shots of himself on the ice."

Street says the experiment has been a powerful lesson for his small-town school. "I'll never again doubt what a tremendous and sometimes overwhelming learning tool the Internet really is." ✓

Major Shakespeare

You probably wouldn't expect to find a retired Air Force pilot doing pirouettes and dancing around a classroom of young teenagers to get them excited about Shakespeare.

But **Donald Huston**, a ninth grade English teacher at Chickasha Junior High School in Oklahoma, has never been conventional.

"I think some people are a little fearful of Air Force majors, just like others are fearful of learning Shakespeare," he says. "I'd like to think I take the fear out of both those things."

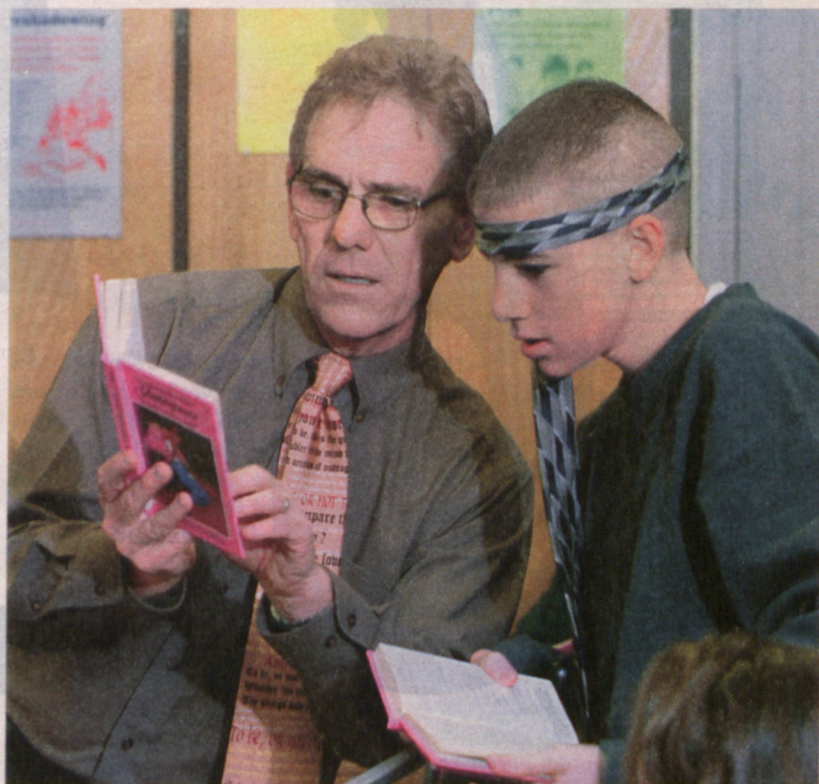
For 20 years, Huston flew B-52 planes around the world and lived in exotic locales such as Guam, Thailand, and Japan. When he retired in

1991, "Shakespeare"—a nickname he earned because of his love for the author—began substitute teaching and taking courses toward his master's in English.

"Substitute teaching was a lot like flying," he says with a chuckle. "Except when you fly airplanes you have some sort of control."

With five years of full-time teaching now under his belt, Huston knows that just because he slips into the language of Shakespeare easily doesn't mean that all his students do.

To make them more comfortable, he asks them to insult or compliment each other using Shakespeare's words. It's this creative and animated teaching style that recently earned him a nomination for Chickasha Teacher of the Year. ✓



Lisa Rudy Hoke

Calendar Art Says 'No' to Tobacco



Monica Modranski

I'm too smart to start." That's just one of several catchy phrases **Russ Shaffer's** fourth grade students are repeating these days—students who are too smart to start using tobacco.

For seven years, Shaffer—who teaches art at four elementary schools in Brooke County, West Virginia—has coordinated a calendar of art project featuring his students' artwork and tobacco-free messages.

"The calendars are learning tools," says Shaffer. "The kids don't participate just to draw pretty pictures. They do it to get anti-tobacco messages out."

Shaffer is determined to help kids understand the seriousness of tobacco, which is the leading cause of preventable death in the United

States. He's especially concerned by national polls and anonymous surveys in his own classrooms that indicate many young students are tempted to try using tobacco.

By involving them in the calendar project, he's hopeful they'll learn early to avoid the temptation.

"There is a lot of enthusiasm for this project from the kids, parents, and even grandparents," Shaffer notes. "If that excitement entices kids to not start smoking, then we've won half the battle."

Last year, the governor of West Virginia used the calendar to try to pass smokeless tobacco legislation.

"My ultimate goal," says Shaffer, "is to have large agencies, like the Cancer Society, see the calendar and use it on a massive scale to bring attention to the cause." ✓

Close Encounters with Ozzy

It was 1983, a time of big hair and big music. It was also the year clean-cut Ohio math teacher **Mark Meuser** accepted a dare from his third period high school students and accompanied them to his first hard rock concert: Ozzy Osbourne.

"Looking back, it was an incredible experience," says the 29-year veteran at Gahanna Lincoln High School. "One I wanted to relive and share over and over again."

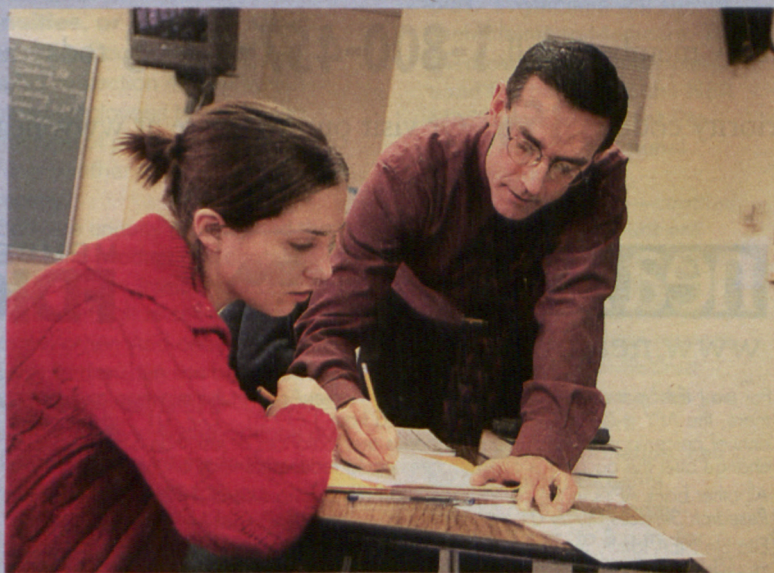
In 2000, he got his wish. No, he didn't check out the latest hard rock tours. He published a book, *Close Encounters* (Rivercross), documenting the humorous, touching, and even heartbreaking stories about students who have

come and gone from his classroom and how they have touched his life.

His short story about the Ozzy Osbourne adventure, "This Isn't Ozzie and Harriet," is just one of many vignettes that have caught readers' attention. *Close Encounters* spent weeks on Amazon.com's top five list in Ohio.

From the stunts he pulled in his rookie days to tales of today, Meuser relates the small successes of the classroom as they occur, one at a time.

Meuser says the book reflects his own transformation as a teacher. "It celebrates those moments when teachers and students connect beyond the classroom walls." ✓



Mike Munden

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**All other bank APYs in the comparison chart are accurate as of 1/2/01, based on a \$2,500 minimum opening deposit, and rates may be higher for higher balances. Source – Informa Research Services, 1/2/01.

†Eligible NEA family members include parents, spouse (or domestic partner) and children.

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Find the Right Funds for Your Kids' College

Q: My husband and I had our children late. By the time they're in college, we'll be 60 years old. What should we do for college savings?

A: You must be part of the baby boom generation—and you're not alone.

The obvious answer is to start early. Just aim to invest a little bit regularly every month. Company dividend reinvestment plans, or DRIPs, that allow you to buy small amounts of stock directly from the company are one option. You can find out about them online. Other good alternatives are Web services like www.sharebuilder.com and www.buyandhold.com, where you can buy small amounts of stock with no minimum investment required.

If your child is young, invest aggressively. Consider health care or technology, if you can handle the volatility in these sectors.

You can buy into technology by buying a broad technology index like the NASDAQ 100 Trust, which invests in the 100 largest non-financial stocks on the NASDAQ. Or you can buy a managed technology fund.

Avoid custodial accounts if you plan to apply for financial aid. A custodial account, set up under your state's Uniform Gift to Minor's Act, allows you to tuck away money in

your child's name.

Once in the account, the money belongs to the child. When he reaches the age of majority, he can do whatever he likes with it. Some parents see that as a negative. But a bigger negative is that the money in this account makes it virtually certain that your child will not receive financial aid. That's because the financial aid formula assumes that the money in this account is available for college. So saving for college in your child's name counts heavily against you for financial aid.

A more promising option is the state tuition program called a 529 plan. These programs allow you to save pre-tax money for college and keep it in your own name. The money is taxed at your child's rate when he takes it out to pay for college.

Although the plans have been around for years, they were once so unappealing that they weren't worth writing about. Today, though, they're hot.

Many states have introduced new programs in the past several months, usually linking up with a mutual fund company as a vendor. The plan does not limit your child's choice of colleges.

Although you need not use your own state's program, you may get a tax deduction if you do. The Web is also a good place to do research on these programs. I found a good deal of information on them by going to www.google.com.

Q: How many stocks do you need

to make up a portfolio?

A: I've heard an argument made for as few as seven, provided one of them was a company like General Electric, which is a big conglomerate that owns all kinds of things—including broadcasting companies and credit companies—under the GE name. The idea is that a stock like GE gives you diversification within a single company. But I still think seven is too few.

If you plan to hold only individual stocks, I think you need 30 or 35. But if you're willing to use a mutual fund as a core for your portfolio and then add individual stocks to it, you can get by with fewer.

Suppose you bought a fund like the Standard & Poor's 500 Stock Index, which gives you 500 stocks across all market sectors. Then you have instant diversification and you could do with fewer individual stocks, say 15 or so.

Still, you'll have to expect more volatility from your portfolio than if you owned broadly diversified mutual funds.

Q: Is a 403(b) plan an annuity?

A: It might well be. Section 403(b) was added to the Internal Revenue Code in 1958 to permit employees at non-profits and government agencies to set aside pre-tax money in an annuity contract offered by an insurance company. These 403(b) plans are often referred to as tax-deferred annuities, or TDAs for short.

In 1974, Congress added paragraph 7 to section 403(b), which allowed employees to set up the same type of plan with a mutual fund company rather than an insurance company.

Both the annuity product and the mutual fund product can contain mutual funds as investment options. It can be difficult to tell one product from the other. And one is not necessarily better than the other. But, as with any investment product, it's important to review your options and make certain you've made the choices that are best for you.

—Mary Rowland

Rowland is an author and contributor to several financial magazines.



Steven Parrish

The NEA Member Benefits Web site (www.neamb.com) has more than 700 electronic pages of money-saving offers and special values for NEA members and their families.

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Coverage ranges from \$100,000 to \$250,000.

For more information call 877/814-4350, Monday–Friday from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. CST. Or visit the NEA Member Benefits Web site at www.neamb.com. Click on "Insurance Programs."

There are new advantages for NEA-Retired members participating in the NEA MemberCare Medicare Supplement Program.

Available to retired members aged 65 and older, the program recently introduced a national electronic-claims filing process for all doctor bills. Physicians will submit their claims to Medicare. Then Medicare will automatically send the balance to the NEA Medicare Supplement Program, with no additional paperwork.

This new feature—coupled with the free discount program and low prices—makes the NEA MemberCare Medicare Supplement Program one of the best reasons to keep your NEA-Retired membership active when you leave full-time work.

For more information, call NEA Member Benefits 800/637-4636, Monday–Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (or Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) ET.

Thrifty Educator

This month's tips come from Jean Mahony, a third grade teacher from Westbrook School in Glenview, Illinois, and Debbie Bohn, a fifth grade teacher at Aldrin School in Schaumburg, Illinois.

Mahony: "The January issue of *NEA Today* carried brief tips from two teachers about how they use photographs and postcards for classroom projects. I teach third grade, and my idea combines their tips. Every summer I take a big vacation trip and I have doubles made of my photos. Two weeks before school starts I use the photos as postcards and send them to my incoming students, telling them where I went and explaining how excited I am about the upcoming school year. Some of the photos stay on their refrigerators for a whole year!"

Bohn: "When our student teachers complete their time with us, we fill a bag full of goodies: stickers, E-Z grader, bulletin board stuff. We each give a teaching tip that is fun, easy, and appropriate for just about any age. It is a great send-off for student teachers and allows them to spend their precious few dollars for real teaching materials."

If you have a favorite money-saving tip that you apply in your workplace, please send your idea along to neatoday@nea.org.



Tests for America

Education Week offers a readable, comprehensive look at standards and high-stakes testing.

EXCERPT

In California, teachers pay less attention to the state standards and curriculum frameworks than to the content of the Standard Achievement Test—9th Edition, according to Latimer, the third grade teacher.

"As far as [standards] driving the curriculum, I don't hear that conversation.... There's the SAT-9 out there."

A BETTER BALANCE: STANDARDS, TESTS, AND THE TOOLS TO SUCCEED—THE QUALITY COUNTS 2001 REPORT FROM EDUCATION WEEK
Lynn Olson, Project Editor
Editorial Projects in Education, \$10

In planning their comprehensive study of standards and testing, the editors of *Education Week* had a truly radical idea. Rather than talking only with business leaders, politicians, and academic experts to find out what's happening in American classrooms, they decided to ask teachers.

The 2001 edition of *Education Week's* annual *Quality Counts*

report includes a national survey of 1,000 public school teachers.

The poll showed that teachers support standards, but not high-stakes tests.

■ 87 percent of the teachers said standards are a "move in the right direction."

■ 74 percent said the level of standards in their states is "about right."

■ 67 percent said their teaching has become too focused on state tests.

■ 66 percent said they are concentrating too much on information that's on the tests, to the detriment of other important areas of learning.

■ 37 percent support high school exit tests.

■ 11 percent support tests for promotion from one grade to the next.

Besides giving the poll data, the writers present teachers' vivid portrayals of what's really happening in classrooms.

The extensive reporting of teachers' views is just one example of the common sense and thoroughness that characterize this work.

Here's another:

The report provides snapshots of each state's standards and testing situation, and each snapshot includes the latest information on student achievement in that state from the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

NAEP is the only program that gives the same set of tests to rep-

resentative samples of students across the country.

When the state says most of your students are failing, you can use the NAEP scores to make a reasonable judgment as to whether the students are really doing poorly or whether your state has set the bar much higher than other states have.

The report also looks carefully at claims about the supposed public support for flunking students and withholding diplomas based on tests. Public opinion, it turns out, changes according to how questions are phrased.

For example, the Business Roundtable found that more than 60 percent of the public say students should have to pass state tests to graduate from high school, even if they have passing grades in their classes.

But Public Agenda found that nearly 80 percent believe schools should use teacher evaluations along with test scores to make such decisions.

This *Quality Counts* report paints a broad picture of standards and testing across the country, and also fills in the details state-by-state.

It's an indispensable reference work for anyone who wants to act to protect children from unfair state tests.

To read the full report online or to order a printed copy, go to www.edweek.com/sreports/qc01/.

—Alain Jehlen

BOOKS by NEA Members



Why Can't We Talk?

What Teens Would Share If Parents Would Listen—A Book for Teens
By Michelle L. Trujillo
Nevada middle school

teacher "Mrs. T" compiled this collection of teen experiences to help adolescents and parents communicate. Each section on common problems features a wide variety of teen viewpoints that can be used as conversation starters. 372 pp., \$12.95 from Health Communications, 800/441-5569. On the Web at www.whycantwetalk.com.



The Good Teacher's Almanac

How To Become the Teacher You Always Wished You Had
By Tom Smock

Physics teacher Smock has written a practical and inspirational book to guide new teachers and motivate experienced ones. There are sections on finding a mentor, lesson planning, managing paperwork, preserving your sanity, and finding your identity as an educator. 230 pp., \$17.95 plus \$4 s&h from Van Arsdale House Publishing. Fax orders to 973/691-8477 or E-mail VAHPub@aol.com.



Vietnam Insights

Logic of Involvement and Unconventional Perspectives
By James M. Griffiths

More than 20 years of teaching high school history has culminated in this book by Vietnam vet Griffiths. *Vietnam Insights* seeks to explain the background of U.S. involvement in Vietnam in an easy-to-understand fashion, while presenting different angles on several common public assumptions about the war. 234 pp., \$12.95 plus \$2.50 s&h from Vantage Press, Inc., 516 West 34th St., New York, NY 10001. 800/882-3273.



The Ultimate Playground & Recess Game Book

By Guy Bailey

The new third edition of Bailey's *The Ultimate Sport Lead-Up Game Book* will be available this spring, but this resource book is available now. Phys ed teacher Bailey has put together more than 170 different games and activities for the playground, including sports, traditional games, games for large or small groups, and rainy-day activities. 155 pp., \$16.95 from Educators Press, 5333 N.W. Jackson St., Camas, WA 98607, 360/834-3049.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Disability in Children's Lit

Help students gain perspective on disability with *Happy Ever Afters: A Storybook Guide to Teaching Children About Disability*. Author Kathy Saunders gives an overview of disability issues in children's literature and recommends almost 70

books for all age levels. \$14.95 from Stylus Publishing, LLC, P.O. Box 605, Herndon, VA 20172-0605, 800/232-0223.

Witnesses to War

Witnesses to War: Eight True-Life Stories of Nazi Persecution by Michael Leapman goes beyond the familiar story of Anne Frank to include the experiences of children across Europe whose lives were affected by WWII, from those selected for "Germanization" to those living in occupied France or Eastern Europe, imprisoned at Auschwitz, and more. Includes maps and more than 60 black-and-white photographs. Winner of the Times Educational Supplement's Senior Information Book Award, 1999. \$7.99, from Penguin Books, www.penguin.com.

The Father of Electromagnetism

Introduce teens to one of the most influential scientists of the 1800s—and one of the heroes of today's scientists—with *Michael Faraday: Physics and Faith*. This illustrated biography by Colin A. Russell discusses Faraday's groundbreaking

work in chemistry, electricity, and magnetism, as well as his lifelong religious faith. Part of the Oxford Portraits in Science series. \$22 hardcover from Oxford University Press, 198 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016-4314, www.oup.com.

Lots of Lists

From history to economy to pop culture, from the essentials to the obscure, *The USA Book of Lists: The Ultimate Compendium of All Things American* covers it all. Author Stephen J. Spignesi provides hundreds of fun facts, statistics, and quotations to liven up lessons in the social sciences, including the texts of the "10 greatest American speeches" and the Bill of Rights. \$15.99 from New Page Books, www.newpagebooks.com.

African American Books

The founders of Black Books Galore!, organizer of children's book festivals, have brought us two new books for parents and educators.



The Black Books Galore! Guide to Great African American Children's Books About Girls and the *Black Books Galore! Guide to Great African American Children's Books About Boys*, both by Donna Rand and Toni Trent Parker, feature

descriptions of more than 350

books each, with separate sections for babies and preschoolers and early and middle readers. Each \$15.95 from John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 800/225-5945, www.wiley.com.

Journey Through Time

The Deep Time Diaries, "transcribed" by Gary Raham, introduces older elementary students to

NEW from the NEA Professional Library

Teacher Evaluation and Student Achievement

NEA Student Assessment Series

James H. Stronge and Pamela D. Tucker

72 pp., \$5.95 member

\$7.95 nonmember #2073-1-00-FN

EXCERPT

When linking student learning with teacher effectiveness, it is important to remember that student assessments . . . have the potential for benefit or misuse. We propose the following eight practices to reduce possible bias and increase fairness when using student assessment data to evaluate educational personnel:

- Use student learning as only one component of a teacher evaluation system that is based on multiple data sources.
- Use student growth as a measure versus a fixed achievement standard or goal.
- Select student assessment measures that are most closely aligned with existing curriculum.

Using student achievement measures in teacher evaluation is an extremely controversial practice, but one that is growing in popularity. James Stronge and Pamela Tucker have written a scholarly and well-researched examination of four approaches to the use of student achievement in teacher evaluation and have identified the strengths and weaknesses of each. Stronge and Tucker conclude that teacher evaluation should be informed by student progress, but they point out the pitfalls in relying solely on student test scores.

To order, call 800-229-4200, or check the Web at www.nea.org/books.



the Precambrian era through the fictional diary of two teenagers sent back in time. Interspersed with the diary entries are a wealth of background

information, maps, activities, and illustrations. \$17.95 from Fulcrum Publishing, 800/992-2908, www.fulcrum-resources.com.

TVTIPS

Ancestors in the Americas

PBS, March 23 and 30, 9:00–10:00 p.m. ET, check local listings.

This two-part series examines the history of early Asian immigrants to the Americas. Combining dramatic reenactments and composite voices with typical historical resources such as primary sources and scholar interviews, the program explores the experience of Asian immigrants and Americans from the 1700s to the 1900s. On March 23, "Coolies, Sailors, Settlers: Voyages to the New World" looks at why and how people from Asia came to North and South America and connects developments in Europe and the Americas to Asian immigration. Airing March 30, "Chinese in the Frontier West: An American Story" chronicles the arrival and experience of Chinese immigrants in California, from the 1850s Gold Rush through the Exclusion Acts of 1882 and anti-Chinese riots in the latter part of the century.

A companion Web site offering teaching guides, related historical documents, a timeline, additional resources and a bibliography, along with resources for researching family history, can be found at www.cetel.org. ✓



Ask Mr. Teacher

Unbiased, Uncensored, and Untrue Answers to Teachers' Most Urgent Questions

Ask Mr. Teacher

Unbiased, Uncensored, and Untrue Answers to Teachers' Most Urgent Questions

About Education

By John Patrick Dodds
Dodds began his "Ask Mr. Teacher" Web site in 1998. His parodied advice column pokes fun at all aspects of the teacher's experience. 66 pp., photocopied, \$8.87 plus \$1.13 s&h, from John Patrick Dodds, 5485 N. 7th St., Fresno, CA 93710, E-mail jpdodds@hotmail.com.

TV TIPS

After the Storm

USA Network, March 30, 9:00–11:00 p.m. ET, check local listings. Adapted from Ernest Hemingway's short story set in the 1930s Caribbean, *After the Storm* follows the fate of two men whose greed gets the better of them as they set out to recover treasures from a sunken luxury yacht.

Voyage of The Unicorn

Odyssey Channel, March 2 and 3, 9:00–11:00 p.m. ET, check local listings.



Based on the book *Voyage of the Basset*, this two-part presentation

follows an antiquities professor who ventures into a mythical world created by his illustrator wife before her death. The professor sorely misses his wife and the spark she brought to their lives, and his young daughters struggle in different ways with the loss of their mother. When the family stumbles into the land of Faerie Isles, their journey becomes one of self-discovery and healing.

70s: Bell Bottoms To Boogie Shoes

The Learning Channel, March 4, 9:00–11:00 p.m. ET, check local listings.

A lighthearted look at the decade that spawned platform shoes, pet rocks, and lava lamps, this two-hour special explores the social history of the 1970s. Interviews with the creators of television shows such as *All in the Family* and *Saturday Night Live*, along with musicians and comedians, provide insight into a time marked both by psychedelic pop culture and social and political turbulence.

Destination Future: High-Tech Transportation

The Learning Channel, March 12, 9:00–10:00 p.m. ET, check local listings.

Using virtual-reality tools to show what the future may hold for methods of transportation, futurists, scien-

tists, sociologists, and designers consider how we might get around two years, two decades, and two centuries from now.

Boys Will Be Boys

Fox Family Channel, March 13, 4:00–5:00 a.m. ET, check local listings. *Boys Will Be Boys* presents the



story of a 15-year-old girl who is victimized by sexual harassment at her school.

Though her family supports her, it is only when a lawsuit is filed that school officials become convinced there is a serious

problem. The program is presented especially for educators, with one-year taping rights and online support materials for middle school educators, including a study guide and a bulletin board discussion available at www.KIDSNET.org or www.foxfamilychannel.com/cableclass.

The Neanderthal's World

Discovery Channel, March 18, 8:00–10:00 p.m. ET,



check local listings. Well suited to their cold and rough environment, Neanderthals produced more

Saving Lives is Simple. Be an Organ Donor.



Currently, more than 65,000 Americans are waiting for a life saving organ transplant. And every 16 minutes another name is added to the waiting list.

Tragically, every day 12 people will die while awaiting a transplant.

Thankfully, one donor can help more than 50 people in need.

To Be an Organ Donor:

- 1 Indicate your desire to be an organ donor on your state driver's license or identification card, and carry an organ donor card.
- 2 Share your decision with your family. Sharing your decision with your family will spare them the added burden of guessing your wishes at a difficult time.

I want to Share My Life! Organ/Tissue Donor Card

I wish to donate my organs and tissues and have shared my decision with my family. I wish to give:

☐ any needed organs and tissues

☐ only the following organs and tissues:

Donor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness Signature: _____

Witness Signature: _____

(Carry one card with you at all times, and give the other to your family)

I want to Share My Life! Organ/Tissue Donor Card

I wish to donate my organs and tissues and have shared my decision with my family. I wish to give:

☐ any needed organs and tissues

☐ only the following organs and tissues:

Donor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness Signature: _____

Witness Signature: _____

(Carry one card with you at all times, and give the other to your family)

To get a free brochure on organ & tissue donation and how to talk to your family about this important decision call 1-800-355-SHARE or download donor cards for friends and family at <http://www.organdonor.gov/>

A Message From the NEA Health Information Network

than 60 types of stone tools but were unable to adapt once the ice sheets melted and they were cut off from their hunting grounds. Living in small groups that were increasingly isolated from each other, the Neanderthals slowly died out. This program uses dramatizations with prosthetics and cutting-edge

animation to chronicle the rise of the Neanderthals and show what likely happened some 35,000 years ago when their world intersected with that of the Cro-Magnon.

**CNN Newsroom:
Eye of the Storm**
CNN, March 22, 4:30–5:00
a.m. ET, check local list-

ings. This special CNN Newsroom presentation explores the weather, beginning with a basic explanation of common types and causes of weather and continuing with a look at the science of snowstorms and blizzards and the destructive power of hurricanes and

tornadoes. Online simulations from Riverdeep Interactive Learning and discussions with meteorologists and other experts will be featured in an interactive Web cast on CNNfyi.com.

**American Writers:
A Journey Through
History**

C-SPAN, Mondays, March 18 through December 2001, 9:00–10:00 a.m. ET, check local listings.



C-SPAN looks at the lives and works of American authors who have considered, chronicled, or influenced the course of U.S. history. Broadcasting live from a historic site each week, the series traces American history through 8 eras and 45 writers. From William Bradford and Sojourner Truth to Black Elk and Upton Sinclair to Ernie Pyle and Betty Friedan, the program explores the eras of the writers, along with their backgrounds and impacts on society and history.

Programming schedules, detailed information on each author, and lesson plans can be found at www.american-writers.org or www.c-span.org/classroom. Each program repeats on Fridays at 8:00 p.m. and is commercial-free and copyright cleared for educators.

**Trade Secrets:
A Moyers Report**

PBS, March 26, 9:00–11:00 p.m. ET, check local listings. Bill Moyers investigates the assumption of most Americans that corporations shoulder the burden of proving chemicals are safe and that the government protects them from harmful ones. In the past 50 years, more than 75,000 chemicals have been released into the environment. Based on industry documents, this report looks at how the failure to fully inform Americans of the dangers created by some of these chemicals has placed public health and safety at risk.

**Superhuman Body:
The Future of
Medicine**

The Learning Channel, March 27–28, 9:00–11:00 p.m. ET, check local listings. Four areas of current medicine and healing are explored in this series, including new approaches to treating trauma, improvements in transplant surgery, the harnessing of the

Free for all.



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Technology Resource Teacher

Built in conjunction with educators — for educators, AOL@SCHOOL features 300 of today's most respected educational content providers — all organized for quick, easy access. Add to that thousands of pre-screened Web sites, age-specific content, resources for teachers and administrators, e-mail, lesson plans, local account management — even dedicated customer support, and you've got a powerful educational tool that benefits the entire school.

AOL@SCHOOL is recognized by such educational organizations as ASCD, ISTE and NASSP as a safe, useful and easy-to-implement Internet program for today's classrooms. And there's no monthly access fee. You simply use it with your schools' existing Internet connection.

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human body's natural ability to heal itself, and the use of



bacteria and viruses to jump-start the immune system and fight disease. The programs use microscopic, time-lapse, and slow-motion photography along with medical imaging, animation, and documentary footage to provide a glimpse into the future of medicine.

The Sign of Four

Odyssey Channel, March 23, 9:00-11:00 p.m. ET, check local listings.

An Englishwoman calls upon Sherlock Holmes to investigate an anonymous gift of



pearls that she has received along with a

letter promising to right wrongs done to her, in this original presentation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's classic mystery.

Fight for Your Rights: Take A Stand Against Discrimination

MTV, Public service campaign

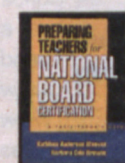
This 2001 yearlong campaign is focused on empowering young people to fight discrimination in their communities and within themselves. The campaign addresses discrimination due to religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and physical or mental

ability. Throughout the year, programming events and specials along with news segments and public service announcements will be aired. A free *Youth Action Guide*, which identifies key ways for people to fight discrimination, will be available through the MTV Web site, and online components and local grassroots organizing will expand the campaign. For more information, visit www.FightforYourRights.MTV.com.

KIDSNET, the national resource for children's electronic media, provides the listings for these educational programs. For more information, write to KIDSNET, 6856 Eastern Ave., NW, Suite 208, Washington, DC 20012, or visit www.KIDSNET.org for more extensive programming information.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

National Board Certification



Preparing Teachers for National Board Certification: A Facilitator's Guide by

Kathleen Anderson Steeves and Barbara Cole Browne All about National Board certification. \$40, from Guilford Publications. To order, call 800/365-7006 or visit www.guilford.com.

Web History

As a response to the launching of Sputnik I in 1957, the United States created the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA), which developed a computer network called ARPANET. In *How the Web*

Was Born, James Gillies and Robert Cailliau use



diagrams and photos to help explain how ARPANET grew into the Internet and how Tim

Berners-Lee put together a prototype server and browser he called the WorldWideWeb. \$15.95 from Oxford University Press. To order, call 212/726-6000 or visit www.oup.com.

Social and Economic Justice

In *Capitalism and Justice*:



Envisioning Social and Economic Fairness, John Isbister

describes his ideas of social justice and speaks to the domestic problems of social and

Need A Mortgage?



NEA Members can get a great rate, superior service, and a 4-day vacation "on the house."

The NEA Home Financing Program® provided by Wells Fargo Home Mortgage can make buying a home or refinancing a hassle-free experience. In fact, 97%* of members would recommend this program to another member.

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Mon. - Fri., 8 a.m. - midnight, E.T., Saturday, 9 a.m. - 5:30 p.m., E.T.
Home Equity Hours: Mon. - Thu. 8 a.m. - 10 p.m., Fri. 8 a.m. - 8 p.m., Sat. 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., E.T.

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HFNT0301

economic justice, such as income distribution and hiring policies. Also taking on international issues of foreign aid, immigration policies, and environmental justice, he emphasizes that democracy is the best forum for resolving our problems. \$24.95 in paperback from Kumarian Press, Inc. To order, call 800/289-2664 or visit www.kpbooks.com.

Learn To Write Grant Proposals

In *I'll Grant You That: A*



Step-by-Step Guide to Finding Funds, Designing Winning Projects, and

Writing Powerful Grant Proposals, Jim Burke and Carol Ann Prater take you through each stage of proposal writing. This guide will enable you to navigate to the information you need while working under pressure. Sidebars are cross-referenced to an enclosed CD-ROM. The chapters on workshops include helpful checklists. \$25 from Heinemann, Inc. To order, call 800/793-2154 or visit www.heinemann.com.

Great Bears

Adult male bears are called boars and adult female



bears are called sows. Polar bears and brown bears can run 30 to 35 mph

over short distances. All bears are good swimmers. Photos of bears are on every page of *Bears*, by Dagmar Fertl, Michelle Reddy, and Erik D. Stoops. \$17.95, hardback, from Sterling Publishing Co., Inc. To order, call 800/367-9692 or point your browser to www.sterlingpub.com.

Seeking a Job in Teaching?

What kind of job suits your talents and preferences? How can you sell your talents? How do you prepare a resume and



portfolio? How do you make a good impression at your job interview? *Getting a Job in Teaching*, by Joanne C. Wachter, is for anyone pursuing a career in education from counseling to adminis-

tration. \$8 (\$6 for members) from Phi Delta Kappa International. To order, call 800/766-1156.

50 Games About the States

State Debate, by Kevin J. Brougher, is designed to entertain students while teaching factual information about the United States. It includes 50 games that will test students' knowledge about the 50 states. The games are played with fact-filled U.S. playing cards and sometimes with a timer, both of which are included. \$16.95 plus \$2 s&h from Missing Piece Press. Call 253/813-2303 or visit www.MissingPiecePress.com.

Fastbacks on Creativity, Standardized Testing, and HIV Education



Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation has three new

titles in the Fastback series. 458, *Rethinking Creativity*, presents recent research on creative people. 459, *A Short Guide to Standardized Testing*, explains how tests can or ought to be used in schools. 461, *HIV Education: Perspectives and Practices*, outlines the requirements for a successful HIV education program in schools. \$3 each (\$2.25 for members) from Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation. To order, call 800/766-1156, or visit www.pdkintl.org.

Descriptions of Slavery

To Be a Slave consists of descriptions of slavery in the words of slaves or former slaves. Julius Lester



researched and compiled the book and wrote the historical commentary. Tom Feelings provided the illustrations. A 1969 Newberry Honor Book. \$5.99 from Puffin Books. To order, call 800/788-6262 or visit www.penguinputnam.com/yreaders.

Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement

Freedom's Children is about

DIVERSITY Calendar

April

Passover, April 8-15 (begins at sunset, April 7)

Jewish festival marking the deliverance of the Jews from slavery in Egypt. Traditional Seder ceremonies take place during the first two evenings and commemorate the historical idea of freedom.

Kids' Domain at <http://www.kidsdomain.com/holiday/> provides crafts and activity ideas, "printables" such as mazes and coloring pages, clipart, and links to additional resources for both Passover and Easter.

Easter, April 15

Easter, the first Sunday after the full moon following the spring equinox, was one of the first holidays celebrated by early Christians and represents the anniversary of Christ's resurrection.

May

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

Designated by Presidential proclamation to celebrate the collective accomplishments of Asian Pacific Americans, who include many ethnic groups with diverse backgrounds, histories, languages, and cultures. Check out <http://www.abcfish.com/apa/> for profiles of more than 60 Asian Pacific Americans prominent today.

El Cinco de Mayo, May 5

Originally the anniversary of a Mexican victory over the French at the Battle of Puebla in 1862, El Cinco de Mayo has become a general celebration of Mexican American culture in the States. Visit <http://www.vivacincodemayo.org/history.htm> for a history of the holiday and recommended links.

the civil rights activists of the '50s and '60s. Barbara



Levine interviewed eyewitnesses to the major events, wrote the historical background, and provided photos, a chronology, and a who's who. \$6.99 from Puffin Books. To order, call 800/788-6262 or visit www.penguinputnam.com/yreaders.

Get Ready for Y3K



NextWorld: Super Science Fiction Stories describes the exciting adventures of kids

living in the 23rd or even the 30th century. John Whitman wrote these six stories for middle-grade readers. \$5.95 from Lowell House Juvenile. To order, call 800/323-4900.

New Survey on Religion in American Life

For Goodness' Sake: Why So Many Want Religion to



Play a Greater Role in American Life is a report from Public Agenda for the Pew

Charitable Trusts. The study probes how typical Americans think about the role religion should play in

politics, public schools, and social settings. \$10 plus \$2 s&h from Public Agenda. To order, call 212/686-6610 or visit www.publicagenda.org.

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American Sounds

It evolved in New Orleans, moved to big cities in the East and Midwest, and



endeared itself to people everywhere. *Jazz*, a film by Ken Burns, complements the 10-part series on PBS. The Web site has a history and audio clips of jazz, biographies of jazz musicians, links to the best jazz on the Web, and Shop Jazz for your jazz collection. Visit www.pbs.org/jazz.

Looking Upward

Gape at photos and diagrams of the tallest buildings in the world on SkyScraper Page. Included are aerials of the Hagia Sophia, the largest church in the world when completed in 532 A.D. in Constantinople (now Istanbul) and views of the

greater Bratislava metropolitan area in the Slovak Republic. Share your enthusiasm for tall buildings on the amateur's page. Go to www.skyscraperpage.com.

Free to Teachers

The WorldCom Foundation teamed up with six great learning institutions and created MarcoPolo to provide free online resources and training workshops for K-12 teachers. You can download teacher training kits on Internet content for the classroom for elementary grades and above. In geography, you will find nearly 600 maps; in science, you can choose the grade level and content of subjects ranging from the nature of science to habits of mind. Go to <http://marcopolo.worldcom.com>.

Yahoo for Kids

Yahooligans!, the Web Guide for Kids, has



resources for fans of Harry Potter, chat rooms for kids, and links to many things kids love at www.yahooligans.com.

in the Light Lane

Those Tropical Diseases

After teaching a geography unit on latitude and longitude, I gave my fourth graders a quiz.

In response to the question "What are the two Tropic Lines called?" one student replied: "The Tropic of Cancer, and the Tropic of Lung Disease."

*Bill Waste
Lyme, New Hampshire*

One of my first graders was on the floor reaching under a movable cart that was against the wall. When I asked him what he was doing, he told me he was trying to get his tooth out from under the cart.

I rolled the cart out for him. As he retrieved the tooth, I asked him how it got under the cart. He grinned, revealing the new space where the tooth had been, and said, "I shot it with a rubber band."

*Marcia Homer
Port Angeles, Washington*

During a speech session with one of my very active third grade students, we played a game to practice his speech.

I noticed he was looking ahead to the direction cards and was very excited when he appeared to know what each one said before I read it.

Playing along, I asked the child how he could possibly know everything I was going to ask him to say. With a huge smile he replied, "That's easy. I'm psycho!"

*Cathy Donohoe
Rochester Hills, Michigan*

During a recent math unit, I instructed my students to do the work in their heads.

When it came time for the test, I had one child who answered all of the questions except the mental math section. I, of course, marked those problems as incorrect.

When going over the test results the following day, he said, "But Mrs. Heller, you said that we weren't to write anything down on paper after doing them in our heads!" (I guess I neglected to make a big deal over at least printing the answer on the line provided!)

*Sandy Heller
Oak Park, Michigan*

I was reviewing the exploits of Nathaniel Bacon with one of my students who had completed a timeline assignment about this 18th-century Virginia colonist.

The student had dutifully filled in the dates that Nathaniel Bacon had led uprisings against the Native

Americans, been jailed, freed, and subsequently burned buildings in Jamestown.

I knew we needed more review when he asked, with a puzzled look on his face, "But how did a pig do all of that?"

*Nancy Heitz
Darien, Connecticut*

I find that I am constantly explaining the meanings of sayings and idioms to the high school participants in my vocational class.

We recently talked about the meaning of "being a guinea pig" when we decided to try a new technique on one of our projects.

I was sure that the saying was understood. But when we needed volunteers for a new activity a few weeks later, one of my students anxiously asked, "Patty, can I be the gerbil?"

*Patty Schoff
Anoka, Minnesota*

One morning during reading group, my students and I were reviewing the parts of a book, such as the table of contents.

One of my students told me that he'd told his mom what one of the parts of the book was, but she said he was wrong. I asked him what part of the book he'd been talking about. He pointed to the table of contents and said, "I tried to tell her—it's the table of consequence."

*Misty Holloway
Knoxville, Tennessee*

While doing vision screening on a second grade class, I suspected that one of the students might be having problems with her vision.

I asked her if she was having trouble reading the board when she was sitting at her desk. She replied, "Only when the teacher stands in the way!"

*Deloris Luetchford, CSN
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania*

Each day my fifth grade students complete daily language activities. One day, they had to make corrections to a sentence that should read: "The builders just finished work on Herman's house."

The apostrophe in "Herman's" had been omitted. When I asked for a volunteer to make the correction, a male student changed the sentence to: "The builders just finished work on *her mans* house."

*Jennifer Zais
Westport, Maryland*

I was showing my first grade music students a repeat sign and asked if they knew what the sign meant.

One little pianist pointed to the double barline next to the repeat sign and said that shows it's the end of the piece. I told the student he would be right—except that there were two dots with it, and they meant to do something else.

I asked if anyone knew what the dot sign meant they should do. One cute little girl raised her hand and said sweetly, "It means to bow."

*Jan Stewart
Chardon, Ohio*

Holiday Humor

During the holidays, I decided to sing Christmas songs and have the children fill in the missing words. I began, "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer had a very shiny nose, and if you ever saw it ..."

Little Avery's eyes lit up. She jumped up and down with her hand in the air, so I called on her. She finished, "You would even say it blows!"

*Anna Gross
Richland, Michigan*

On the last day of school before the holiday break, my fifth grade students were taking a social studies test. After I pass out the test, I always put an extra credit question on the board.

This time I wrote: "On the ninth day of Christmas, what did my true love give to me?"

One student raised his hand and said, "How are we supposed to know what your husband gave you for Christmas?"

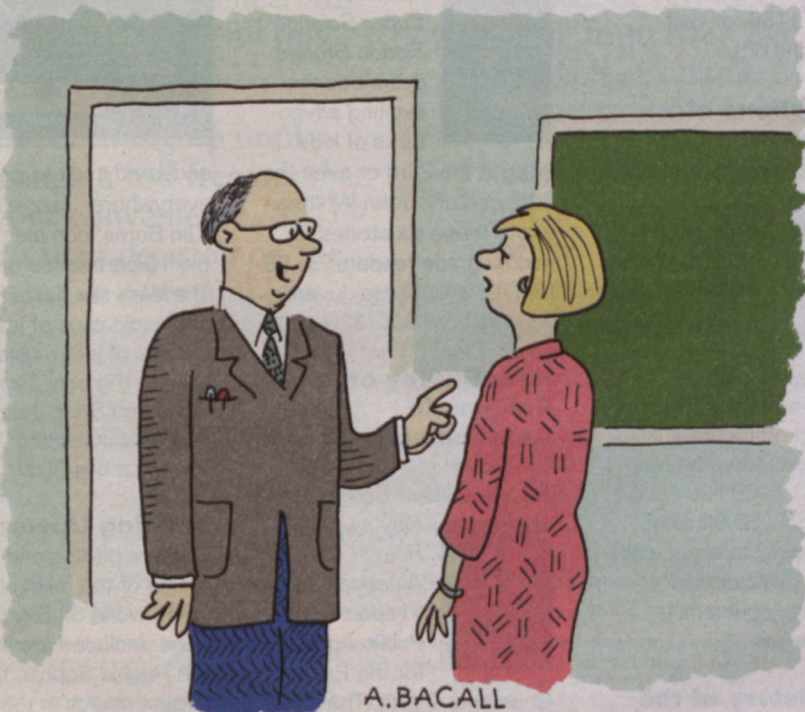
*Joanne Gallagher
Lena, Illinois*

As an elementary school librarian, I was often called upon to help students find appropriate books.

One day, a young girl asked my help in finding an animal book.

As we checked out the different books, she confided to me, "Someday, when I grow up, I want to be a vegetarian."

*Sue Luxa
Littleton, Colorado*



"The students seem to like the Web page for my chemistry class since I added animated beakers and some heavy metal background sounds."

Got Laughs?

● Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane," NEA Today, 1201 16th St., NW, Washington, DC 20036. Fax: 202/822-7206. Send E-mail to neatoday@nea.org.

● Want a classroom chuckle delivered to your E-mail box once a week? Subscribe to the new "In the Light Lane" mailing list. Just send an E-mail to join-lightlane@list.nea.org (no subject or message needed).

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